DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 663 CE 065 118

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TITLE Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line. Report Number 962.
INSTITUTION Conference Board, Inc., New York, N.Y.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-8237-0409-2
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 63p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Development; *Conflict Resolution; Corporate Education; *Employment Practices; *Family Problems; *Family Programs; Operations Research; Organizational Climate; Personnel Management; *Productivity; Program Development; Research Needs; *Role Conflict; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Family Work Relationship

ABSTRACT

A 1988 symposium on the effect of family problems on the corporate bottom line and a review of more than 80 other studies have confirmed that business investments in programs and policies to resolve family-work conflicts yield returns. Family issues/problems have been documented to affect employee recruitment, productivity, turnover, and absenteeism. Job factors such as time elements, job demands, and work environment and family factors such as marital relationship, spouse support, spouse employment, and division of labor have all been found to affect different employees in different ways depending on the given employee's sex, occupational status and income group, and employment status (full- versus part-time status). Included among the specific family problems that have been found to affect employee productivity are stress, pregnancy, child care, and elder care. Employee-sponsored child care centers, parental leave, flextime, and employee assistance programs have all been demonstrated to reduce employee turnover. Companies may not want to conduct research on work-family issues because of its cost and complexity. Such research is valuable, however, because it can help identify the most effective responses to family-work issues/problems. Directions for future research on work-family issues include the following: interdisciplinary, holistic, comparative, longitudinal, interactive, and visionary research studies. (MN)

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ED 364 663

The Conference Board

Report Number 962

Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line

This comprehensive research review answers these questions:

- *What is the impact of work-family problems on absenteeism, turnover, and employee stress?*
- *Who bears the brunt of work-family conflict—work or family? men or women?*
- *What are the productivity effects of on-site child care, maternity leave, flextime, and employee assistance programs?*

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Printed in the U.S.A.
ISBN No. 0-8237-0409-2

Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line

by Dana E. Friedman

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From the President

There are a growing number of U.S. corporations responding to the family needs of their workers. But before a company implements its work-family agenda, it often must justify the appropriateness of business attention to family issues and demonstrate a return on investment from new policies or programs.

For some, substantiating the bottom-line effects of family issues has been arduous. Until recently, little research in this area has been done. Few companies surveyed their employees to find out about their family problems, and even fewer evaluated the programs that had been implemented. Designing a reasonable study may be complex and costly. What research exists may be unpublished, or hidden in obscure social science journals and written in non-business language.

Early on, The Conference Board recognized the important role that work and family issues would have on the human resources agenda for the 1990s. In 1983, the Board created its Work and Family Center and organized a Work and Family Research Council to support research in this area. In 1988, with the support of AT&T Communications, Exxon Corporation, the Du Pont Company and IBM Corporation, the Board convened a group of business leaders and researchers from a variety of disciplines to review what existing research concluded, and what research still needed to be done.

This report presents the research summaries of the 1988 symposium and the findings from more than 80 other studies conducted in the past few years. It gathers in one place most of the information that a company would need to determine the appropriateness of creating a work-family agenda. It is intended as an introduction to research for the business leader and an introduction to business for the researchers who hope to shed further light on this subject in the years ahead.

PRESTON TOWNLEY
President and CEO

About the Author

Dana E. Friedman is co-president of the New York-based Families and Work Institute. She is a leading researcher, consultant and author on the subject of child care and corporate work and family programs. In 1983 she was a founder of The Conference Board's Work and Family Information Center and is the author of two other Conference Board studies: *Corporate Financial Assistance for Child Care* and *Family-Supportive Policies: The Corporate Decision-Making Process*.

Method

This report reflects the most comprehensive review of research that tries to link family issues to bottom-line business concerns. It includes findings from more than 40 studies at individual companies and an additional 40 studies on employees across a variety of work locations.

The framework for this report is derived from the information presented at a Conference Board Symposium on Workplace Research on the Family, held March 23-25, 1988, at The Arden House in Harriman, New York. Several experts were asked to review the literature and a panel of representatives from progressive companies were asked to respond. The purpose of the symposium was to bring together researchers and corporate executives who had been involved in recent studies exploring the work-family nexus. The meeting focused on the research process and research findings in an effort to build upon and improve the growing knowledge base on work-family issues.

Participants were asked to consider the following four questions as they reviewed the findings from their research:

1) What aspects of jobs are most predictive of work-family conflicts for employees and their families?

2) What aspects of family life are most predictive of work-family conflicts?

3) What are the different dynamics of work-family conflicts as they relate to gender and family status?

4) What are the different dynamics of work-family conflicts as they relate to age and occupational status?

Ellen Galinsky of the Families and Work Institute, Arthur Emlen, then of Portland State University, Fran Rodgers of Work/Family Directions, Inc., and Mary Beth Shinn of New York University, summarized the findings from all of the submitted research on the nature of work-family conflict. The effects of workplace programs were discussed by researchers who conducted literature searches on dependent care, alternative work schedules and counseling. Presenters included Dana Friedman, then of The Conference Board, Kathleen Christensen of City University of New York, and Sheila H. Akabas of Columbia University's Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace.

Researchers and corporate executives who participated in the Arden House panel examining the research process included Bradley Googins and Diane Burden from the Boston University School of Social Work; Bruce Davidson, employee assistance manager for Digital Equipment Corporation; Karen Geiger, vice president, NCNB Corporation; Steve Wexler, manager of employee communications and research at Merck & Co.; Ben Wilkinson, director of human resources, Faith Wohl, director of workforce partnering from the Du Pont Company; Norman Costa, director of research for IBM; and John Fernandez representing AT&T Company and several other corporations where he conducted research as a consultant.

Subsequent to the symposium, additional researchers and companies were contacted to learn more about the outcome of their research efforts. Each contact lead to another company or study. Attendance at conferences, a thorough literature search and a review of bibliographies from published research reports were also used to find studies that might lend insight into the connection between family problems and company solutions on the bottom line.

During this time, the author got feedback and insight from The Conference Board's Work and Family Research Council. They helped to identify new research and interpret some of the findings presented in newly released studies. Other experts at the Families and Work Institute and Work/Family Directions, Inc. contributed to the dialogue about the conclusions that could be drawn from the findings.

There were no criteria for eliminating studies from this review. While the findings from poorly conducted research are not presented, their methodologies are discussed so as to help companies and researchers avoid some of the common pitfalls in conducting research of this nature. The presentation of findings does not always mention whether tests of significance were applied to the data since many companies seem satisfied with the knowledge that modest improvements in work performance ultimately yield a financial gain or the prevention of a financial drain.

The Conference Board is grateful to AT&T Communications, Exxon Corporation, the Du Pont Company and IBM Corporation for their support of the symposium and this report of the findings.

Executive Summary

There is evidence to suggest that work-family programs can improve a company's bottom line. Today's labor market developments and lagging productivity create the economic necessity that may result in corporate efforts to accommodate the family. It may be a labor shortage or a labor mismatch; it may even be layoffs that create the need to boost morale among those who stay. Whatever the reason, companies are evaluating their recruitment efforts, benefit plans, work schedules and productivity incentives—all designed for the more homogenous, male-breadwinning work force of the past.

What role does research play in demonstrating this bottom-line impact and motivating companies to respond to family needs? The conclusion of this report is that some research is necessary, but in most cases it is not sufficient by itself to justify an investment. Somewhere in the process of designing and implementing family-supportive policies, research will be needed to create a buy-in from key players within the organization. However, research can make the case to those who want to see the connection between the bottom line and family concerns, but it will be unconvincing to those who do not believe in this new role for business. In either case, the CEO or someone in top management must be an advocate for a more "family-friendly" workplace before change will occur. The role of research in decision making and program design is likely to increase as the body of relevant research grows. In generating work-family programs, research goes hand in hand with a commitment to the needs of a changing work force.

Thousands of companies have responded to the family needs of workers despite the limited body of research available. Some of the research examines the effects of family problems, or how much the company may be losing by not responding to the family needs of employees. Other research helps define the effects of family programs, that is, how much the company may gain by addressing employees' family needs. To date, far more research has examined how productivity is negatively affected by unmet family problems than on how it is positively affected by company efforts to solve the problem.

Part of the reason for this imbalance is that few companies have evaluated their new family-supportive initiatives. Virtually no studies compare different work-family initiatives and their effects on work behavior. Most current research provides information for employers on whether or not to take action at all, rather than on helping them select or implement effective policies and programs.

What seems clear from national trends as well as research is that recruitment and retention efforts can fall short as the result of family problems. Productivity can suffer and absenteeism and tardiness can increase when employees experience conflicts between their work and family responsibilities. The family may bear the greatest brunt of the imbalance, but work attendance and performance is affected as well.

Stress is on the rise, and much of it can be attributed to the increased burdens on single parents and two-earner couples who have jobs at home and at work. The research indicates that the stress produced by work-family conflict is due to daily hassles, and not necessarily catastrophes.

Pregnancy involves some periods of fatigue or sickness and absences due to delivery and convalescence. About 85 percent of new mothers return to work after their leaves, many of whom have difficulties finding reliable, affordable *child care*. The inadequacies of the child care market cause working parents to miss work or feel stressed about their children in someone else's care.

As with child care, *elder care* problems are largely the result of inadequacies in the social services available in the community. The complexity and duration of elder caregiving often increases stress levels, absenteeism and quit rates beyond those caused by child care.

Are there programs that will prevent these negative repercussions from occurring? With very few evaluations of company programs, a body of small, but consistent research suggests that child care centers, parental leave policies, flextime and employee assistance programs offer some payback to the company.

The research on the *employer-supported child care center* suggests that reduced turnover may be its most positive benefit. According to one national study, companies with a progressive *maternity leave policy* had working mothers who were more satisfied with their jobs, took fewer sick days, and were less likely to quit. *Flextime*, with a fair amount of flexibility, can reduce tardiness and absenteeism and improve morale. And research on *employee assistance plans* indicates the potential for a reduction in stress and health care costs.

Companies may not want to conduct research on work-family issues because of its cost and complexity. Resistance to research on employees' family problems may reflect a concern about employee reactions to issues of privacy, the sensitive nature of the questions that are posed, or to the expectation that the company should do more. A decision to proceed is made only when it is clear that the company is prepared to respond to the findings. The hesitancy to conduct evaluations of family-supportive policies and programs stems from the need for a costly, sophisticated research design that calls for pretests and post-tests over a long period of time.

Existing research offers a benchmark for assessing the findings from future studies. By comparing findings from different time periods, it is possible to see the evolution of employee expectations regarding employer attention to family concerns. Employees may have underestimated their work-family problems in early studies because workers were concerned about admitting, even anonymously, that they were absent for family reasons. Such admissions were thought to be risky in unsupportive climates.

As work environments change and employers become more savvy about work-family issues, employees, now safe in speaking up, may begin to exaggerate their problems in order to ensure a management response. Changes in employee expectations over time may yield a clearer picture of the problem, but not of the solution. As this report will show, more evaluations of work-family programs can help strengthen the effectiveness of company responses. If companies really want to know the costs and benefits of their family-supportive programs, they may not only need to become more family-friendly, but more research-friendly as well.

Introduction

Do corporate investments in the family needs of employees yield a return? Or are they nice things to do for employees that offer no financial payback?

There is evidence to suggest that work-family programs can improve a company's bottom line. Today's labor market developments and lagging productivity create the economic necessity that may result in a corporation's making workplace changes to accommodate the family. *Workforce 2000*, the report from the Hudson Institute commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor, has had enormous impact on our understanding of the shifting size and composition of the available labor pool.[1] Whether it be labor shortages or a labor mismatch, companies are evaluating their recruitment efforts, benefit plans, work schedules and productivity incentives—all designed for the more homogenous, male-breadwinning work force of the past.

Obsolete workplace practices may account for increasing relocation refusals, apparent gender inequities, and unsuccessful minority hiring and career development. A study of family concerns may reveal these human resources problems, or family concerns may emerge as a business issue after an investigation of relocation problems or affirmative action complaints. In either situation, the need to address family concerns has been established and appropriate changes may follow.

While the impetus for a company response to family needs is primarily economic, what ultimately motivates a company to change? Amory Houghton, former chairman of the board of Corning Inc. and currently a New York Congressman, remarked at a 1981 work and family conference: "One percent of all companies want to be first and 99 percent want to be second." Today, at least 10 percent of large corporations provide some dependent care programs, and a growing number of small- and medium-sized companies are beginning to follow suit. Competitive momentum in the field has created some of the motivation for companies to respond as competitors—whether within an industry or within a community where they must draw from the same labor pool. The media attention that often follows a company initiative provides an additional incentive.

Some companies may feel pressures from unions that put family issues on the bargaining table. Others may react to threats of government-mandated benefits, such as the current debate about family and parental leave. With several federal bills pending and 13 states with mandated leaves, many employers have revised their leave policies so as to appear proactive, rather than reactive, in the face of government demands.

What role does research play in motivating companies to respond to family needs? The conclusion of this report is that some research is necessary, but not sufficient to justify an investment. Somewhere in the process of designing and implementing family-supportive policies, research will be needed to create a buy-in from key players within the organization. Accountants or shareholders may require more substantiated evidence that a family problem is causing a productivity loss or that a family-supportive response will create a productivity gain. But the CEO or someone in top management must be an advocate for a more "family-friendly" workplace before change will occur.

Research can make the case to those who want to see the connection between the bottom line and family concerns, but it will be unconvincing to those who do not believe in this new role for business. If a company believes that personal problems should be kept at home, management will be resistant to any data suggesting that employees bring their problems with them to the workplace, or that the company has a responsibility to help solve those problems as a matter of self-interest. In other words, seeing is not believing when assessing the capability of research to influence corporate behavior.

Thousands of companies have responded to the family needs of workers despite the limited body of research available. There are, however, several methods to assess the effects of family issues on the bottom line.

[1] William B. Johnston and Arnold H. Packer, *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1987.

(1) ***Individual company needs assessments***: A company considering policy changes or new programs may first want to develop a demographic profile of the employees, with feedback on how unmet family needs negatively affect work performance. Such surveys may ask employees how often they have been absent from work due to a child care problem, how frequently they have lost concentration on the job due to worries about elder care, or how many times they refused relocation or promotion opportunities due to family conflicts.

(2) ***Studies of employees across companies***: Surveys of employees working for a number of different firms, either on a national scope or within a particular community, can provide indications of family concerns that cause problems at work.

(3) ***Evaluations of individual company responses***: A study can be conducted to determine the effects that a family-supportive policy or program has on employee work patterns and performance in an effort to improve the program or justify its continuance.

(4) ***Studies of managers across companies***: Researchers can obtain feedback from managers regarding the potential for a family supportive program to yield a return on investment. Some studies include surveys of all employers in a particular state or community, whether or not they have any family programs in place. Others survey managers working in companies with family-supportive programs in order to assess their perceptions of the effects of those programs.

The first two types of research—employee surveys in one company or across companies—help define the effects of family *problems*, or how much the company may be losing by not responding to the family needs of employees. The second two types of research—evaluations of specific programs or surveys of managers' perceptions—help define the effects of family *programs*, that is, how much the company may gain by addressing employees' family needs.

This report divides the research according to these two types of outcomes. More than 80 research studies are incorporated into the analysis. To date, far more research has examined how productivity is negatively affected by unmet family problems than how it is positively affected by company efforts to solve the problem. For instance, studies show how often parents are absent due to sick children or the frequencies of work interruptions due to elder care responsibilities. But far less information exists on whether a sick child care center or an elder care referral service would mitigate the negative effects of these problems. In essence, much more is known about what companies *lose* by not responding than about what they might *save* if they did respond.

Part of the reason for this imbalance is that few companies have evaluated their new family-supportive initiatives. Such research is often complex and expensive; it requires pre- and post-testing and studies of comparison groups over a long period of time. It is also difficult to attribute cause-and-effect relationships to an initiative since companies often implement several policies at once. No one can be sure that changes are the result of a child care program or a flextime schedule when both were implemented within weeks of each other.

As the number of companies with family initiatives expands and the legitimacy of an investment is more widely perceived, companies become more interested in learning which options will yield the greatest return. At present, virtually no studies compare different work-family initiatives and their effects on work behavior. Most research provides information for employers on whether or not to take action at all, rather than helping them select or implement effective policies and programs.

Interest in evaluations may increase as companies with family initiatives try to learn more about the effectiveness of these programs. For instance, while child care studies typically examine employer-sponsored child care centers, the positive findings have often been used to substantiate an investment in other types of child care support. However, while evidence suggests that a child care center can improve morale, loyalty and productivity, and reduce absenteeism, turnover and tardiness, little is known about the magnitude of the effects or whether they apply to any other types of child care programs.

Scope of This Analysis

This report contains the most comprehensive analysis to date of research that attempts to link productivity and other work behaviors to work-family problems and programs. In most cases, references to these research studies are abbreviated in the text of this report. A full citation for each study can be found in the report.

Part 1 (pages 11-35) looks at the nature and manifestations of work-family problems, such as stress, pregnancy, child care and elder care. *Part 2* (pages 37-59) reviews effects of company responses to these problems, including parental leave policies, employee assistance programs, flextime arrangements, and on-site child care centers. The consequences of each are described in terms of company issues: recruitment, retention, absenteeism, tardiness and productivity.

While the research findings show the potential for a return on investment in family-supportive policies, these claims must be put in context. Common sense does not accept, nor does research show, that companies can solve all management problems with work-family initiatives. Dull and unpleasant jobs cannot be improved by the presence of a child care center at the worksite. Other work conditions and the company culture may have an overriding impact on work behavior and productivity. Determining what workplace environments help foster effective programmatic or policy responses to family needs is the next frontier for research in the work-family arena.

Where Work and Family Meet

Companies considering work-family responses want proof that they will save money. Evaluations of such programs, however, are scarce. Firms appear far more likely to conduct needs assessments that demonstrate the level and nature of unmet family problems. As Allen Bergerson, director of personnel policy development at Eastman Kodak, notes: "In 1987, when our work-family task force proposed implementation of our family-supportive policies, management asked what rate of return could be expected on the investment. I responded that the savings or return could not be substantiated, but that the problems we were attempting to solve were costing more than the proposed investment, and that we were more than confident that the return would exceed the costs of the programs. Nothing has occurred since to shake that confidence."

This section of the report examines how work-family problems affect the company in terms of recruitment, productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. It also explains the sources of work-family conflict and the specific impacts of work-family problems such as stress, pregnancy, child care and elder care.

Recruitment

Companies are competing for a shrinking number of workers, many of whom are female, foreign or elderly. The needs of these workers will have an impact on whether or not they enter the labor force and for whom they will work.

The majority of women currently available for work are in their childbearing years, and most will have children during their work careers. A survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in 1982, however, found that 26 percent of women who were not employed would work if affordable child care were available; another 13 percent of mothers working part time said they would work more hours if they could find child care.[2]

Child care issues may hamper recruitment at senior levels. Only an estimated 30 percent of women in senior positions have children, compared to 95 percent of men in similar positions.[3] If the majority of women with children are excluded from consideration, companies cannot draw from a complete pool of talent for the highest levels of management. Felice Schwartz, president of Catalyst, an organization committed to women in management, observed at a 1988 Conference Board conference on women in the corporation: "Companies that are determined to recruit the same number of men as they used to for leadership will have to dig much deeper into the male pool....Even employers reluctant to hire women into upper management positions ranks will recognize that it is better to have high-performing women than moderately performing men."

Another recruiting problem involves minority groups, who will double their representation in the labor pool between now and the turn of the century. Although labor shortages normally produce openings for minority workers, *Workforce 2000* raised the issue of the concentration of minorities—a high proportion of whom are single mothers—in economically declining cities where job opportunities are not abundant. Scant research exists on the needs and expectations of minority workers, especially those in low-income families. Similarly, the family cultures of new immigrant populations and their workplace problems and needs are unknown.

Productivity

"Productivity" is a popular word that has come to mean more than the classic economic definition of "output over input." The limited research available on the subject suggests that family problems may cause worry at work, resulting in a loss of concentration and the inability of the employee to perform up to par.

[2] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports Series, p. 23, No. 129, *Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers*, June 1982, Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983.

[3] *The Corporate Woman Officer*, Chicago, IL: Heidrick and Struggles, Inc., 1986; Korn/Ferry International's *Executive Profile: Corporate Leaders in the Eighties*, New York: Korn/Ferry International, 1986.

Table 1: Relating Child Care to Productivity

Employees reporting that child care responsibilities affect productivity some, significantly, or a great deal.

	All Employees	*Men*	*Women*
Company A (high technology)	48%		
Company B (pharmaceutical)	43	38%	51%
Company C (law firm)	41	35	45
Company D (apparel manufacturer)	33		
Company E (home care products manufacturer)		48	59
Company F (pharmaceutical)		36	62
Company G (pharmaceutical)		29	49
Company H (financial services)		35	46

All studies conducted between 1985 and 1990.

One reason research is limited is that the human factors contributing to productivity are rarely assessed. Labor is generally seen as a cost of production, rather than as a critical factor in the productive outcome. Jerome Rosow of the Work in America Institute contends that this perspective fosters a negative attitude that may contribute to the prevailing distrust between management and employees. As a result, costs of benefits and other employee programs are not recognized for their return on investment.

Productivity studies show that the human factor contributes between 10 and 25 percent to productivity growth. Workers account for 50 percent or more of controllable costs; in labor-intensive services and government agencies, they account for 70 to 80 percent of all costs. Rosow warns: "Managers who ignore the human side of the enterprise do so at their own peril."[4]

Studies show that family concerns are often reported to reduce productivity and effectiveness at work. In eight company surveys, about half of the women and more than a third of the men contend that child care responsibilities affect work to some degree (Table 1). A study of 33 companies in Oregon, conducted by Arthur Emlen, found that a third of employees with adult dependents work less effectively due to worry about their elders. Thirty-eight percent of women caregivers and 22 percent of male caregivers report these effects. A survey of the Adolph Coors Company found more than one-third (36 percent) of employees reported a decline in productivity due to the child care problems of *co-workers*.

[4] Jerome M. Rosow (ed.), *Productivity: Prospects for Growth*, New York: D. Van Nostrand and Company, 1981, p. 128.

Turnover

High employee turnover is frequently considered an important cause of lagging productivity rates in the United States. Companies are also concerned with investments in training, the disruption and cost of replacement, and the scarcity of superior talent in the marketplace. Since companies will be competing for workers in what may well be a job seeker's market, the decision to stay with a particular employer may be influenced by the extent to which a company addresses family issues.

J. Douglas Phillips, a vice president at Merck & Co., Inc., which conducted an internal study on the costs of turnover, found that losing one exempt employee costs the company about 1.5 times the individual's annual salary. Non-exempt turnover costs are estimated to be about .75 times the annual salary of a given position.[5] In addition, the average adjustment period for a new employee is estimated to be more than a year (12.5 months). Although companies typically measure the visible components of turnover such as processing and relocation costs, Phillips asserts that less than half the costs of turnover are visible. The hidden costs, according to Phillips, include incoming employee inefficiency, inefficiency of co-workers, and inefficiency of the vacant position awaiting appointment.

Turnover costs become increasingly important as traditional retention strategies are eroded by diminished loyalty and job commitment. Employees are likely to stay with firms that offer good jobs, pay, working conditions, and benefits. It is generally held that lack of job satisfaction leads to voluntary employee turnover. However, data indicate that employee commitment affects turnover far more than job satisfaction. The employee may be dissatisfied with the job but still view the organization positively as a whole.

Among full-time workers, the Census Bureau reports that women are more likely than men to have had one or more work interruptions lasting six months or longer.[6] In 1984, 42 percent of full-time working women (compared to 12.1 percent of men) said they had at some time in their careers interrupted their work for a period of 6 months or longer. "Family reasons"

[5] J. Douglas Phillips, "Employee Turnover and the Bottom Line," Working Paper, 1989, p. 3.

[6] U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Male-Female Differences in Work Experience, Occupation and Earnings: 1984," Household Economic Studies Series, p. 70, no. 10, August 1987, p. 14, in Deborah Walker, *Mandatory Family Leave Legislation: The Hidden Costs*, Cato Institute, Policy Analysis No. 108, June 1988.

were given as the cause of the break by more than a third of these women. According to the 1990 National Child Care Survey, about 25 percent of mothers left their previous jobs for family reasons. Child care problems caused 5 percent of mothers to leave their last job.[7]

Employee turnover may be related to the birth or adoption of a child, or substantial care required for an aging relative. Studies report:

- An estimated 16 percent of new mothers do not return to their jobs after maternity leave.[8]
- An estimated 12 percent of employees quit their jobs due to significant elder care responsibilities.[9]
- Between 1985 and 1988, the proportion of women who considered terminating employment because of parental responsibilities increased by 50 percent. There was also a 50 percent increase in the number of parents who considered quitting work for an employer with more flexibility. The percent of men who considered quitting more than doubled during this two-year period.[10]

Absenteeism

Companies expect a certain amount of absenteeism and recognize that some absence is beneficial to the employee. Some research suggests that rigid efforts to ensure perfect attendance may lead to unintended and negative consequences, such as reduced product quality and increased accidents.[11] All medium- and large-sized companies offer paid time off that includes sick leave, personal days, vacation, or disability time, thus designating legitimate reasons for absence. According to a 1989 Conference Board study, absence for family reasons is allowed in about two-thirds of corporations.[12]

Showing up for work depends on one's ability and motivation to be present. These factors are affected by the availability of support from the family, the community, and the company. Research data suggest that job satisfaction and loyalty are related to absence, and that employer-provided family supports may increase job satisfaction. While the company may blame the family for the absence, the employer's lack of accommodation may be the underlying reason.

The average worker loses between seven and nine days a year; about half of absences may be due to family problems, according to a survey for *Fortune* magazine.[13] Family-related absences are influenced by the following factors:

- the presence, number and age of children
- marital status
- the sex of the employed parent
- form of child care used
- occupational level
- family income
- company policies.

According to Arthur Emlen of Portland State University, who has examined the family reasons for absence:

"If the workforce misses about nine days per year, men who have no children miss 7.5 days. Add a half a day for being a father, one day for using out-of-home care or 5.5 days if the children look after themselves. This brings the total for men to 13.5 days. Women without children start at 9.5 days absent. Two days can be added if kids are in care outside the home or 3.5 days if they look after themselves. Add another three days if she is a single parent. If she is in management, she will miss a day or two less, but she will be late to work more often since her job will allow it. Having a family income of $30,000 or more saves women in management and professional positions nearly two days or a half day for women who are not in that position. The income difference saves men one day at either occupational level. Take off several days if the company's personnel policies severely clamp down on absenteeism, but add stress."[14]

Since family responsibilities change over the course of one's life, related absences will fluctuate for each employee. In an analysis of 23 data sets from 18 studies of absence, gender was found to explain less than 1 percent of the sum of all causes of work absences. (Job satisfaction explained 4 percent; true illness explained 33 percent.)[15]

Absence rates for men and women move in different directions over the course of their working years. For

[7] Sandra Hofferth, April Bayfield, Sharon Deich and Pamela Holcomb, *National Child Care Survey 1990*. Sponsored by NAEYC, ACYF, and Department of Health and Human Services. The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C.: 1991.

[8] James T. Bond, *Accommodating Pregnancy in the Workplace*. New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1987.

[9] *A National Survey of Caregivers/Final Report*, by Opinion Research Corporation for the American Association of Retired Persons and The Travelers Foundation, Washington, D.C.: November, 1988.

[10] Company surveys conducted by Rodgers and Associates, 1985, 1988, Boston, Massachusetts.

[11] Richard M. Steers and Susan R. Rhodes, "Major Influences on Employee Attendance: A Process Model," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1978, Vol. 63, No. 4., pp. 391-407.

[12] Kathleen Christensen, *Flexible Staffing and Scheduling*, New York: The Conference Board, 1989, Research Bulletin 240.

[13] Ellen Galinsky and Diane Hughes, "The *Fortune* Magazine Child Care Study," New York: Bank Street College of Education, Unpublished paper, 1987.

[14] *Employee Profiles: 1987 Dependent Care Survey, Selected Companies*, Oregon: Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, 1987. Arthur Emlen and Paul Koren, *Hard to Find and Difficult to Manage: The Effects of Child Care on the Workplace*, Oregon: Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, 1984.

[15] Robert Haccoun, "Another Myth Goes 'Poof'," *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 95, No. 3, May-June, 1988, pp. 54-56.

women, absence rates increase in their childbearing years (18-44), while for men, the rate falls. An article in the *Monthly Labor Review* concludes: "Marital responsibilities seem to induce men toward a firmer commitment to their jobs, so that they spend less time away from work. For most women, the proportion of time lost increases with the presence of young children."[16]

The 1989 Current Population Survey reports that 11.5 percent of married women who had children under the age of six had absences.[17] But absenteeism due to illness or injury among married women with young children was only somewhat higher than for single women without children. It is the "miscellaneous excuse," probably due in large part to family concerns, that jumps to 7.5 percent for married women with at least one preschooler (compared to 2.2 percent for single, childless women). The miscellaneous category of absences for married men with children decreases as the number of children increases, quite possibly because their wives are less likely to be working.

[16] Bruce W. Klein, "Missed Work and Lost Hours, May, 1985," *Monthly Labor Review*, November, 1986, p. 28.

[17] Op cit, p. 29.

The studies repeatedly confirm that absenteeism is related less to gender than to the worker's economic status and role in the family. For instance, Emlen found that in two-earner families, women missed 50 percent more days per year than men because they carry more of the daily responsibility for child care. Since women on average tend to earn less than men, having the woman stay home to cope with family emergencies is a rational economic decision.

Men rarely miss work due to child care. However, when they do, their absence is strongly associated with poor health and stress. This same association is not found among women.[18]

Emlen also found that companies with low rates of absenteeism have high percentages of employees who report stress related to child care. He speculates that the ability to take time off when needed can function as a safety valve.

[18] Marybeth Shinn, Blanca Ortiz-Torrez, Anne Morris, Patricia Simko, Nora W. Wong, "Child Care Patterns, Stress and Job Behaviors Among Working Parents," New York: Unpublished paper by researchers at New York University, 1987.

The Nature and Sources of Work-Family Conflict

Researchers have begun to define a concept they call "work-family conflict," as a measure of employee functioning. The presence of conflict suggests that the employee will work less efficiently in some way. There are both job and family sources and consequences of conflict (see box, page 16).

The larger concept, "work-family fit," is less understood. Researchers acknowledge that little is known about employees who have learned to manage the work-family balancing act and have developed strategies to avoid conflict. The focus on negative consequences may also overlook the ways in which work enhances family well-being, or how families positively affect work. The findings, instead, are used to demonstrate the costs of not responding to family problems.

The Nature of Conflict

The relationship between family and work is reciprocal. Both are changing and as they do, the relationship between the two creates even more change.

The change in work-family relationships will occur over the course of one's work career. Different problems will occur at different stages of life and at different levels of job responsibility.[19] For instance, for some people, work and family may remain independent of each other. For others, work "spills over" into family life; or happiness or discontent at home affect feelings at work. Still others use one sphere to compensate for what is missing in the other. The most common experience, however, is one of conflict. Of eight companies studied, five companies had about 50 percent of their employees reporting some work-family conflict. Exempt employees report a slightly higher amount of conflict than the non-exempt. Women report more conflict than men, and parents more conflict than non-parents (see Table 2).

Conflict occurs when the demands of one sphere make it hard to comply with the demands of the other. In the 1980 General Mills survey, 64 percent of respondents in the general population agreed that "people who expect to get ahead in their careers or jobs have to expect to spend less time with their families." The percentage was even higher among human resources officers.[20]

Whatever the nature of the relationship, the research clearly shows that the family is more likely to bear the

[19] Paul Evans and Fernando Bartolome, "The Dynamics of Work-Family Relationship in Managerial Lives," London: *International Review of Applied Psychology*, Sage, Vol. 35, 1986, pp. 371-395.

[20] *Families and Work: Strengths and Strains*, Minneapolis: General Mills, 1980.

Table 2: The Extent of Work-Family Conflict

	All Employees
Company A (personal/home care products manufacturer)	53
Company B (law firm)	53
Company C (financial services)	50
Company D (apparel manufacturer)	45
Company E (22 hospitals)	43
Company F (pharmaceutical)	37
Company G (insurance)	37*
Company H (33 companies in Oregon)	23

*Among parents of children under six.
Note: All studies conducted between 1985 and 1990.

Sources of Work-Family Conflict

Jobs contribute to work-family conflict when the employee:

- works long hours;
- has a burdensome work schedule involving overtime, weekend work, travel demands, or shift work;
- has little control over the hours worked;
- has a job with little autonomy;
- is very absorbed in the job;
- has no job security;
- has changed jobs due to promotion, layoff or relocation;
- has a very physically or mentally demanding job;
- has a negative social climate at work;
- has unsupportive co-workers;
- has an insensitive supervisor;
- is in a company with inflexible work policies.

Families contribute to work-family conflict when the employee:

- has a disapproving spouse;
- has inequities in the marriage;
- has an unequal division of home labor;
- has children, especially preschoolers;
- has had unstable child care arrangements;
- has elder care responsibilities, especially for relatives living at a distance.

Source: General conclusions drawn from more than 80 studies of various work and family issues.

greater burden of work-family conflict. Evans and Bartolome found that nearly half of the male managers and a third of their wives described the work-family relationship as one of spillover, specifically negative spillover. In all cases, this spillover was in one direction; the emotions of work carried over into private life, and rarely vice versa. The researchers found that 45 percent of 532 managers studied were dissatisfied with this allocation of time and energy between their professional and private lives, and resented the disproportionate amount being spent at work.[21] In Emlen's research, 59 percent of employees rated family performance good or unusually good, while 86 percent gave a good rating to job performance. Emlen concludes: "The balance is not even and the job takes priority" (see Table 3).

It may be easier for some people to block out family problems at work than to ignore work pressures at home. Research suggests that men seem to pay more attention to areas of their lives where goals are clearly defined. As one employee said in a study, "I know exactly what to do to become the CEO. But who sets goals for the family and children?"[22] DeLong reports that many successful men are highly competent at directing and managing people in the workplace but find themselves inept at managing their personal lives.[23]

The need to keep work and family life separate was based on the belief that different emotional states are required in each sphere of life. Rosabeth Moss Kanter's "myth of separate worlds" is based on the presumption that the world of work functions on objective criteria while home life is exclusively value-laden and emotion-driven. The very standards of work and home life are presumed to be in conflict.[24]

Perhaps the principal form of work-family conflict concerns the overall amount of time that the individual spends tending to both work and family responsibilities, obviously a function of how much is spent in each role. The amount of time parents spend on work, household chores and child care amounts to almost two full-time jobs. Burden and Googins found that married mothers spend about 85 hours per week on these responsibilities, while married fathers spend 66 hours per week on home, work and children. Single mothers spend about 75 hours per week on these tasks[25] (see Chart 1).

[21] Fernando Bartolome and Paul A. Lee Evans, "Professional Lives Versus Private Lives—Shifting Patterns of Managerial Commitment," *Organizational Dynamics*, Spring, 1979, p. 375.

[22] Gary Brice, "Work and Elder Care: The Dual Role of Employee-Caregivers," Buffalo, New York: University at Buffalo, Center for the Study of Aging, 1987.

[23] Thomas J. DeLong and Camille Collett, "Managers as Fathers: Hope of the Homefront," Brigham Young University, 1987. Unpublished paper.

[24] Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Work and Family In the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1977.

[25] Diane S. Burden and Bradley K. Googins, "Boston University's Balancing Job and Homelife Study," Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University School of Social Work, 1987.

Table 3: What Suffers Most: Work or Family?

Percent of employees reporting some interference between work and family responsibilities.

Study Assessing Locus of Work-Family Conflict	*Work Interferes With Family*		*Family Interferes With Work*	
	Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
Fortune (1987)	32%	41%	16%	18%
Fernandez (1986)	22	43	13	39
Merck & Co. (1986)	37	41	18	21
Large chemical company (1986)	35	56		

Different factors affect the work-family relationship depending upon an employee's circumstances at work and at home. There are three conditions which seem to have a major influence on either moderating or aggravating work-family conflict. They include the worker's personality; the perceived importance of each role; and the sanctions or negative repercussions that would result if the role is not performed satisfactorily.

Personality. According to one study, people with Type A personalities may work longer hours and demand more of themselves, thus increasing the potential for conflict. Burke and Weir found that Type A personalities—typically competitive, aggressive, and driven—are at greater risk of bringing work stress home.[26] Evans and Bartolome found that it is not just the personality characteristics alone that matter, but the "person-environment" fit. If the person's skills and needs are not well matched to the job, the misfit could create stress that then affects the work-family dynamic. At its most dramatic level, these researchers identified the "prisoner-of-success syndrome," where work fits the personality so closely that professional activity is more stimulating than any other.

Role Importance. Several studies found that when work is very satisfying and important, individuals spend more time there and use their families as a "battery charger." In this case, work does not invade private life—it excludes it. Another researcher identified the "success spiral syndrome" where success at work reinforces work investment that leads to more success, thus creating more work involvement.

Sanctions. The perception or reality of supervisory disapproval or insensitivity can affect the level of work-family conflict. The fear of job demotion or dismissal could also increase conflict. Sanctions may come from the family as well. An employee commented in one study, "When my kids and spouse begin complaining loud enough, then I spend some time with them."[27] This complaining may be sufficient to increase work-family pressures, or to cause some compensatory action in the world of work.

Job Factors

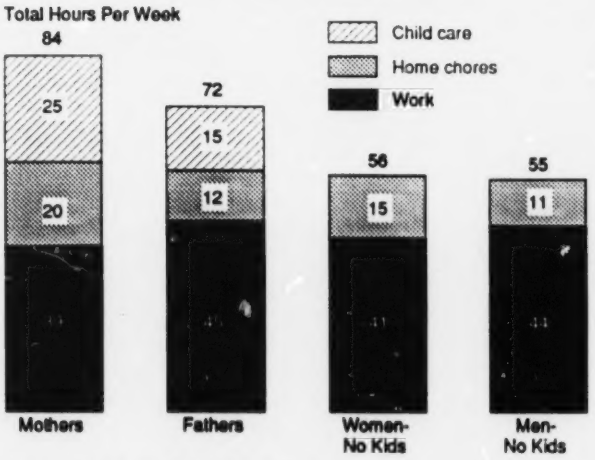
Work-family conflict can be influenced by 12 different aspects of the job. These sources of conflict relate to time elements, job demands, and features of the work environment.

[26] R.J. Burke and T. Wier, "Impact of Occupational Demands on Nonwork Experiences," *Group and Organizational Studies*, 6(4): 1981, pp. 472-485. See also Michael W. Yogman and T. Berry Brazelton, *In Support of Families*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986.

[27] Brice, op cit., p. 3.

Chart 1

Hours Spent by Married Persons on Work and Family Tasks



Source: Burden, D., *Family Relations*, January 1986.

Time Elements

1. ***Number of work hours.*** The more one works, the more conflict one is likely to experience. When employees at Merck were asked what work condition most negatively affected their home life, 25 percent said work hours. The total number of hours worked was found to be the most significant predictor of family strain. The length of the work week can have a positive impact on family well-being until the hours exceed the family's expectations.[28] Galinsky distinguishes between excessive work hours, which are found to create the conflict for men, and inconvenient work hours, which are the source of conflict for women. One study reports that the amount of time husbands spend at work creates work-family conflict. The wife's work hours, however, do not seem to affect the husband.[29]

Commuting time may also increase the amount of time spent "working," and has been a factor in creating work-family conflict. For some it is relaxing time alone; for others it is exhausting. According to some studies, stress increases not from the long commute itself, but from the thought of being so far away from home and the children.

2. ***Schedule of hours.*** Some research indicates that the timing of job demands is critical and leads to work-family conflict. It is not the amount of time consumed by work, but rather modifications in the scheduling of work that creates conflict. Overtime, weekend work and travel demands are significantly associated with the

[28] Dennis Orthner, Paper prepared for Arden House Symposium, 1988.

[29] P. Keith and R. Schaeffer, "Role Strain and Depression in Two-Job Families," *Family Relations*, 1980, 29, pp. 483-488.

overall perception of conflict.[30] Rapoport reports that spending long periods of time working in other countries leads to work-family conflict in one international company. Shift work creates different kinds of problems; afternoon shifts are found to be harder on parenting; night shifts are harder on marriage.

Scheduling can result in problems if it is incompatible with the schedules of other family members or with the hours of needed community services. These scheduling problems have been determined to be more critical for women than men.

3. ***Control over hours.*** Having unpredictable hours can lead to work-family conflict. Rapoport observes that such patterns are more of a problem for employees at lower levels in the organization. In a study of university personnel, Herman and Gyllstron found more severe work-family tensions among professional staff than faculty. Although the faculty worked more hours, they had more control over their schedules.[31]

Job Demands

4. ***Job autonomy/control.*** The less control one has over tasks and responsibilities, the more likely one is to experience work-family conflict. This will affect workers at lower levels more, who have little freedom in determining how the job should be done. However, it may also be a problem for managers who have very controlling bosses.

5. ***Job involvement/absorption.*** Greater job involvement is associated with more satisfaction at work and with more conflict at home. Job demands may not only involve the commitment of workers, but may implicate family members as well. An example is the role of non-working wives of senior executives. Two studies report that men in senior management are more absorbed in their work and less available to families. They have poorer relationships with their wives and children as a result. Other research shows that participatory management may increase stress because of the redistribution of responsibility, while workers who are involved, but unhappy in their jobs experience the most stress.[32]

6. ***Job security.*** Jobs in today's era of downsizing and restructuring are less secure. Research suggests that employees who put in greater effort and who are more confident about their employment security have less work-family conflict than other employees.[33] The research does not explain whether high-effort, job secure employees manage their family lives with less conflicts or whether employees from less-conflicted families are able to exert greater effort and feel more job secure.

7. ***Job change.*** A promotion can be a source of increased conflict until the worker feels comfortable in assuming new responsibilities. Demotions and layoffs are likely to have more negative consequences for the work-family relationship. And, according to Galinsky, relocation can be particularly stressful when the worker has no choice, the spouse is not supportive, the new community seems less desirable, or the merits of the transfer are questioned.

8. ***Physical and psychological demands.*** Greater physical or mental demands increase work-family conflict.

Work Environment

9. ***Job climate.*** A positive social climate can reduce work-family conflict. Galinsky's research has determined that health and safety features can reduce the worry that spouses and children have about the workplace.

10. ***Co-workers.*** The sensitivity of co-workers can affect the work-family relationship. Co-workers' willingness to cover for the employee who has a family problem will affect work-family conflicts in a practical sense. Emotionally, co-worker reactions to work departures for family reasons (maternity leaves, early leaving), can lead to work-family conflict.[34] Piotrkowski finds that conflict among co-workers due to these problems can lead to family problems for children up to one-and-a-half years after the tensions were first experienced.

11. ***Supervisors.*** Supervisors can be a source of support or conflict. Some managers permit alternative work patterns or time away from work. Others make employees choose between family and work. The more unsupportive the supervisor, the more conflict the employee (and the spouse) feels.

A 1990 survey conducted by the Families and Work Institute for *Working Mother* magazine found that the key factor in how a boss responds to work and family conflicts is the work status of the boss's spouse: supervisors who have employed spouses are almost twice as likely to be very accommodating of employees' family needs compared to supervisors in single-income marriages. Furthermore, mothers who work for flexible bosses are more than seven times less likely to want to quit, and nearly four times as likely to say they love their jobs than women who work for inflexible bosses.[35]

Supervisor competence is also a factor in the amount of spillover from work to home. In a 1983 study conducted by Bank Street College, employees in one

[30] Diane Hughes, *Work and Family Life Studies: An Overview of Ongoing Research and Selected Findings*, New York: Bank Street College of Education, 1987.

[31] J.B. Hermann and K.K. Gyllstrom, "Working Men and Women: Inter and Intra-role Conflict," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 1977, 1, pp. 319-330.

[32] C.S. Piotrkowski, *Work and the Family System*, New York: MacMillan, 1979, p. 106.

[33] Karen N. Gaertner and Stanley D. Nollen, "The Effects of Internal Labor Markets on Employee Commitment to the Firm," *Proceedings from the 40th Annual Meeting*, Madison, New Jersey: Industrial Relationship Research Association, 1988.

[34] Mark Frankel, "The Dellcrest Families at Work Study," Toronto, Canada, 1988, Unpublished paper.

[35] Dana Friedman and Ellen Galinsky, "Who Makes the Best (and Worst) Boss?," *Working Mother*, July 1990, p. 56-60.

company were asked to select a work condition that had the most negative effect on work life. The one cited most frequently was the supervisor-supervisee relationship.[36]

12. ***Policy supports.*** Both the presence of family-supportive policies and the expectation of support make a difference in the level of work-family conflict experienced by employees. Inflexible work policies are most predictive of work-family conflicts. One study found that company-sponsored events that exclude spouses can also be a source of work-family conflict.[37]

Family Factors

The composition, relationships, and structure of families, as well as the support services available to them, have an impact on work-family conflict as described in the following seven variables:

1. ***Marital relationship.*** Partners in dual-earner families make decisions concerning work and family life that affect each other. This theme of mutual interdependence, the sense that husbands and wives have goals that are both individual and mutual, is at the heart of the dual-earner family but is, thus far, barely understood.[38]

2. ***Spouse support.*** Research shows that when a spouse disapproves of the employee's job or performance of household tasks, the employee will experience more work-family conflict. Conflict is most likely to occur when the husband has traditional sex role expectations but the wife does not. Wives, whether employed or not, report more inequity at home than do husbands. Couple competence at domestic task management—or how well couples fight—also affects levels of conflict. Couples with poor relationships tend to have weaker adaptive skills, making them more vulnerable to work pressures and job stress.

3. ***Spouse employment.*** Dual-income families may find more work-family conflict if one partner disapproves of the other working, or if the nature of the job is so demanding that it causes problems for the family. The increased income can mitigate the negative effects of work or family demands.

4. ***Division of labor.*** Division of home labor is the most difficult area to negotiate. Women are less confident of the support they get from their husbands than vice versa. The more housework performed by the husband results in lower levels of depression in his spouse and greater marital satisfaction.[39] However, women who believe they are overburdened by an unfair share of labor at home may be more vulnerable to stressful conditions at work.

For married male employees, neither parenthood nor employment of the spouse appears to have any impact on the amount of time spent on home chores. Burden and Googins found that married men report spending about 12 hours per week on home chores, whether they are parents or not. Married fathers report that their wives (employed or not) spend two to four times more hours per week on home chores and child care than the men admit to. Dual-earner wives do somewhat less housework than homemakers, but dual-earner husbands are not picking up much of the slack. Instead, according to Crouter, dual-earner couples rely more on purchasing services, lowering their standards of household cleanliness and organization, and enlisting the assistance of children.

Other research documents that mothers of preschool children spend 72 minutes per day with their children, compared with 25 minutes for fathers. Mothers of school-age children spend 30 minutes and fathers 15 minutes per day with their adolescents.[40] In Kansas City, a survey of employees in 20 large companies found that 37 percent of employed mothers, and 45 percent of those separated from their spouses, had difficulty combining work and family.

When men feel that their wives are not doing their fair share of the household work, they may feel some stress and experience mild physiological symptoms, such as heart pounding or insomnia, but they do not generally report work-family conflict. The same does not hold for wives and mothers, where the perception that the husband is not doing his fair share leads to conflict. DeLong finds that men feel the greatest conflict when their wives expect them to spend more time with their children. Men with more egalitarian outlooks experience conflicts similar in nature and intensity to women.

Anecdotal reports indicate that men are increasing their share of family responsibilities. Companies report a slight increase in fathers taking paternity leave; and more fathers are asking for and gaining custody of their children after divorce. Pleck's research shows that the proportional (not absolute) time spent on home chores between men and women is narrowing as men do slightly more and women do slightly less.

Perceptions and expectations are critical. Spouses are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages if they perceive that their partners are doing more than their share—even if the actual time varies from minutes to hours.[41] Marriages may also be viewed positively when women retain responsibility for overseeing family work. As Galinsky notes, they are the gatekeepers of men's childrearing involvement.

[36] Diane Hughes and Ellen Galinsky, *Balancing Work and Family Life: Research and Corporate Application*, New York: Bank Street College of Education, 1988, p. 9.

[37] Ann C. Crouter, "Rethinking the Dual Earner Family From a Life Course Perspective," Pennsylvania State University, 1986.

[38] Repetti, op cit.

[39] Joseph H. Pleck, *Working Wives, Working Husbands*, Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1985.

[40] S. Yoger and S. Brett, *Patterns of Work and Family Involvement Among Single and Dual Career Couples: Two Competing Analytical Approaches*, Washington, D.C.: Office of Naval Research, 1986.

[41] Diane Hughes and Ellen Galinsky, op cit, p. 2.

5. ***Family size.*** The larger the family (particularly those with a high number of children), the greater the potential for work-family conflict. Even though older children may help with younger siblings, the logistics and costs of three or more children lead to more conflicts between work and home.

6. ***Age of children.*** The presence of children under six will increase work-family conflict for mothers and fathers—but more for mothers. With adolescent children (12-18 years old), the level of work-family conflict equalizes. A study at Merck & Co. reports that 68 percent of mothers and 51 percent of fathers with children under six experienced high work-family conflict. When children were 12-18 years old, conflict was reported by 40 percent of men and 37 percent of women, although other studies find that women's levels of conflict remain higher than men's. It may be that fathers with teenagers feel more compelled to spend time with older children before the children leave the nest. DeLong finds that younger fathers (under 40 years of age) generally want more time with children.

7. ***Presence of adult dependents.*** At the Buffalo office of The Travelers Companies, 85 percent of caregivers said their caregiving responsibilities interfered with some aspect of their life. Seventeen percent had not had a break from caregiving in more than a year and 22 percent had not taken a vacation in two years.[42]

8. ***Support services.*** For both child care and elder care, problems with support services might relate to finding care, satisfaction with services, cost, stability and reliability of care and the number of arrangements needed. The arrangements for elder care are often complicated by the fact that a significant portion of caregivers have responsibility for aging relatives who live more than 50 or 100 miles away from them.

When child care is inflexible or unstable, parents may experience work-family conflicts. Emergency backup is central to a good work-family fit. Parents are most unhappy about the external aspects of child care: hours, cost, location. According to parents in one study, the most important criteria for selecting child care are health, safety, overall quality, and the attention the child receives.

Impact on Different Employee Groups: Does Sex or Money Matter?

The levels and nature of work-family conflict vary for men and women, and for workers within different income groups and job categories. One bias can be noted in the current body of work-family research: the principal focus of research concerning men has been on job factors, while family factors dominate investigations of conflict for women. Another shortcoming in the research is that blue-collar and low-income workers have been studied far less extensively than the more affluent (and autonomous) managers.

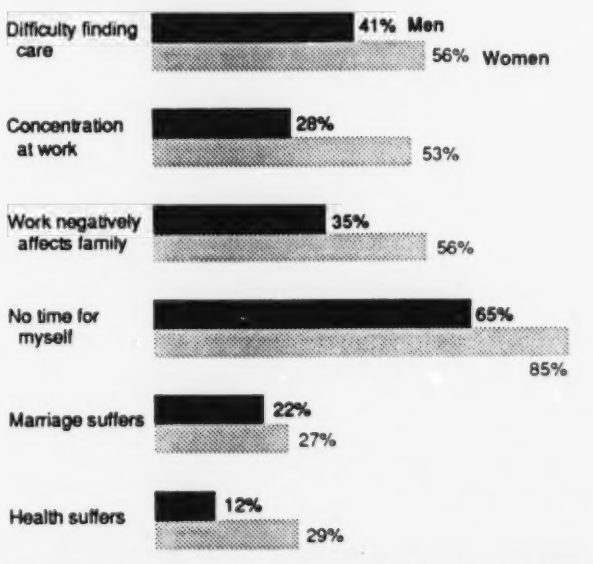
Effects on Men versus Women

Men and women experience work-family conflict differently. At a very basic level, work-family conflict occurs for a man when he loses his job and for a woman when she takes on a job. A man is typically seen as bringing more than one full-time person to the job, with the wife as an asset, while a woman is seen as less than one full-time worker, with the family a distraction. It is assumed that women will have a divided allegiance to work at best, and are much more likely to favor the family over work. Men, especially those with wives at home, are supposedly more committed to work.

In an overview of gender-related findings presented at the Arden House Symposium, Fran Rodgers, president of Work/Family Directions, Inc., reported that about a fourth of employees questioned, regardless of occupational status or gender, concede that their marriages suffer because of work-family tradeoffs. Men, when asked "Do you think having a family enhances your work performance?", were far more likely to say yes than women. Whatever positive effects there might be of family on work, it appears they are more likely to be present for men.

Women still assume primary responsibility for family life (see Chart 2 and Table 4). Yet the most

Chart 2
Work-Family Conflicts Reported by Women and Men



Source: Rodgers & Associates, Surveys Conducted in 1985 and 1988.

[42] Gary D. Brice, David Carstense, and Marlen Kwiatkowski, "A Profile of the Travelers Insurance Company, Buffalo Office, Employee Caregivers to Older Adults," University of Buffalo School of Social Work, 1987.

Table 4: Work-Family Conflicts Described by Honeywell Employees

	Married No Children	*With Children Under 18*		*Dual Earner Couples Under 35 With Children*	
		Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
Family Concerns Affect Work:					
Concentration and judgment affected *often*	21%	34%	40%	28%	53%
Work goals affected	28	44	52	60	68
Work Pressures Affect Family:					
Family relationships	24	39	43	35	56
Lack of time for family	18	35	53*	32	62
Combining Work and Family is *very difficult*	13	31	49*	25	56
Work/Family Affects Individual:					
Overwhelmed by family concerns	12	18	47*	9	53
Usually too tired, stressed from work, for family	18	24	44*	22	57
Family expects too much	15	18	50*	12	49
More stress this year	41	47	54	47	69
No time for self	40	59	86*	60	95
Specific Family Problems:					
No time for children	3	31	44	31	50
No time for spouse	19	33	54*	35	50
Child care		24	32	72**	65**
Sick child care		19	42	53**	65**
Financial problems	12	19	38*	12	44
Dual-earner problems	15	25	40	70**	63**

* Significant difference of 20 percent between men and women.

** Significant difference of 20 percent between all women and women under 35, and between all men and men under 35.

Source: *Work and Family Survey: Productivity Issues and Family Concerns*, October 1986, Honeywell.

important conclusion of research comparing men and women is that work-family conflict is not a gender issue. More accurately, it is related to family roles and responsibilities which are traditionally based on gender.[43] When men take on family responsibilities that women now perform, they suffer the same conflicts and consequences as women, personally and professionally. In a three-company study in New England, Burden and Googins found that gender was not relevant to the incidence of depression or reduced health and energy among employees. Work-family conflict and low salaries were greater determinants of this strain. While mothers in the study were more likely to have problems, men with work-family conflict and low pay reacted exactly the same as women—with reduced physical and emotional well-being.

Another study, by Etzion, concludes that success and self-fulfillment on the job do not preclude a man's success in private life, but for women, success at work may mean failure or dissatisfaction at home.[44] A 1987 *Business Week* survey of 50 top women in business who were compared to a group of equally successful men, reported that half of the women in these senior positions had never been married or were divorced. Half of those married had no children. About 95 percent of the men in comparable positions were married and had children.

In order to achieve equally at work, it appears that women must make significantly more sacrifices than men in their personal lives (see Chart 3, page 22). These views were outlined in a *Harvard Business Review* article by Felice Schwartz, who recommended that companies identify early in their careers women who are likely to have children, and then allow them to develop their careers slowly on what others have dubbed the "mommy track."[45]

According to Etzion: "Women who aspire to high-level careers do so within a societal context of expectations that has traditionally relegated their primary role to the family. They are not likely to receive the same level of social support for their decision. Women tend to have feelings of self-blame and guilt for compromising the traditional feminine role. Thus, the perception and consequences of any particular work-family combi-

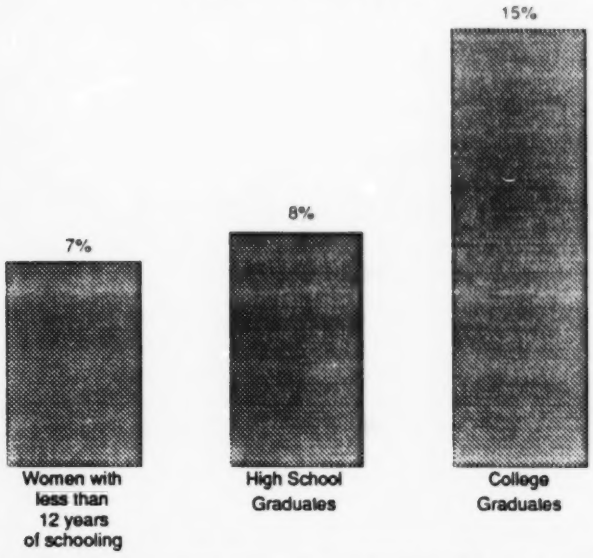
[43] Ann C. Crouter, "Spillover from Family to Work: The Neglected Side of the Work-Family Interface," *Human Relations*, Vol. 37, No. 6, 1984, p. 435.

[44] Dahlia Etzion, "The Experience of Burnout and Work/Non-work Success in Male and Female Engineers: A Matched Pair Comparison," *Human Resource Management*, Summer, 1988, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 166, 171.

[45] Felice N. Schwartz, "Management Women and the New Facts of Life", *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, 1989, pp. 65-76.

Chart 3

Women Age 30-34 Who Expect to Remain Childless



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No 436. Fertility of American Women; June 1988. Issued May 1989.

nation are likely to be different for women than they are for men."

Women also seem to face a two-way bind. They are more likely than men to report that their jobs make it hard to accomplish personal and marital tasks and that family responsibilities interfere with work. For men, problems at work may spill over into the family, but not the reverse. Similarly, the source of work-family conflict for men is typically in the work arena, such as job demands and relationships with supervisors, according to Galinsky's research. For women, the problems tend to originate at home. Women experience conflict when their husbands have traditional values and do not approve of their working or complain about the amount of time they spend on housework. Men experience conflict when their wives complain about the amount of time they spend with the children.

Rodgers reminded the Arden House audience that the research on work and family issues is related to the research on the mental health of women because it is also strongly influenced by whether they are satisfied with their situation. She noted: "If a woman is home, but would rather be working, she is under a lot of stress. Similarly, if she works, but would prefer to be at home, she also experiences stress."

Rodgers urged caution in the comparisons made between men and women in the research: "When you compare all the men and women in the company, you are inevitably comparing a population of older men and younger women. If you do not control for age, you may think you are looking at a gender effect when what you really have is an interference of age and lifestyle differences." Male-female differences may also be a function of job level, since the sample of men is likely to be more weighted toward managerial and professional jobs. Rodgers concludes that: "The closer you get to comparing the men and women in full-time working families where two people experience similar pressures, the more they begin to look alike in their responses to work-family conflicts."

Though women have moved up the corporate ladder, their progress has been slow and contentious. The percentage of women in management and administrative jobs increased from 24 percent in 1976 to 37 percent in 1987.[46] A 1989 survey by Korn/Ferry International of all Fortune-1000 companies found that of the top five jobs below CEO at each firm, only 3 percent are held by women (up from 1 percent a decade ago).[47] The question is whether the differences in family responsibilities and resulting work-family conflict explain the gender differences in career paths. Rodgers comments: "If you ask women how far they are going to get in a company, or what prevents them from going further in their careers, family differences are not the major factor. It is the issues in the culture related to being a woman, such as the old boy networks, concepts of leadership, and use of power." Family factors then are only part of the reason why women are slow to move into senior management.

The Wick study, which triggered much debate, involved 60 women managers and professionals with 5 or more years of experience in a Fortune-500 company. Only one woman reported that she stayed with her original firm because if provided child care assistance. Furthermore, none said they left their company because of work and family conflicts. The authors conclude that "while corporations are attending to women's personal needs (such as child care and maternity leave), their professional needs are being ignored."[48]

Rodgers found these results to be incomplete. The Wick study sample included only 22 women with children. In the studies conducted by Rodgers and Associates, which represent the experiences of 30,000 employees, the authors conclude that family concerns may be a significant reason, but not the only reason why women leave. Fran Rodgers comments, "It is only part of the story to conclude that stalled careers cause women to leave their employers, when, in fact, careers are often stalled because of family responsibilities."

[46] Janice Castro, "Get Set: Here They Come!", *Time Magazine*, Special Issue: The Road Ahead, Fall, 1990.

[47] Dana E. Friedman, Helen Axel, and Lisa M. Lasky, *Women in the Corporation: A Briefing Book*, New York: The Conference Board, 1988.

[48] Victoria Tashjian, "Women of the Corporation: Growing or Going?", Wilmington, Delaware: Wick and Company, 1989.

It is true, however, that women are more likely than men to refuse promotions, overtime, travel, and transfers—the experiences which are often necessary to move up in the organization (see Chart 4). (This may also be a factor of age or marital status.) Women, particularly those with young children, report that their family obligations limit their career opportunities.

Until very recently, a major tenet of the women's movement has been that equality should be pursued in the workplace without demands for special treatment. The companies responded and created a work environment that would allow women, if they acted like men, to advance as quickly as men. We now find that women are absent more than men, and they have twice as many hours of responsibilities for work and family. Rodgers concludes: "Companies believe they have created a level playing field where men and women can advance if they behave the same way. We now know that there is no level playing field because people come to it with entirely different sets of responsibilities."

Occupational Status and Income Groups

Beth Shinn, of New York University, presented a review of research at the Arden House symposium related to differences in income groups. She reported that the literature on life satisfaction suggests that more income is better. More income may also reduce stress. Whether money results in less work-family conflict or not, however, is not as clear. Shinn points out: "It is important to recognize the perception that higher status jobs will lead to more work interference with family time, and that it is an important reason for refusing that kind of work."

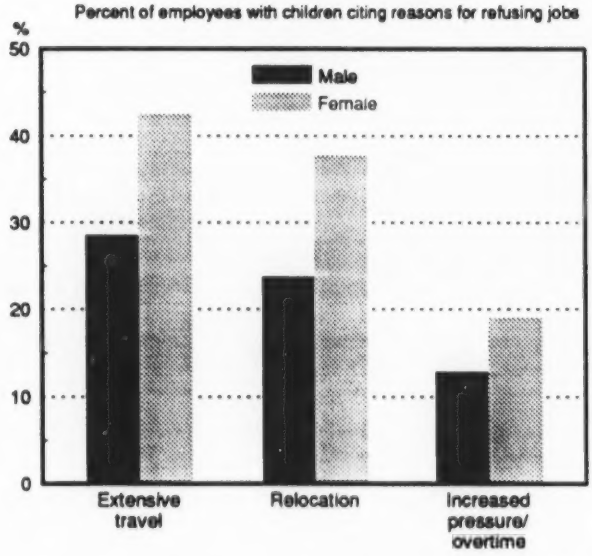
Frankel's research concludes that middle managers have the least work-family conflict because they can delegate work to subordinates and expect flexibility from their superiors. Senior managers, who have overwhelming and consuming work, and lower-level managers who have less control over their work hours and tasks, experience more conflict. Hughes' study concludes that first line supervisors have the highest conflict because of pressures from above and below.

Managers, at all levels, generally are more likely than non-managers to have the flexibility and resources to deal with work-family problems. On the other hand, managers work longer hours, have more pressures and responsibilities, and are more likely to take work home, travel, and be relocated. A study by The National Council of Jewish Women finds that women in professional and managerial jobs have the greatest difficulty combining work and family after childbirth. Professional women tend to place high value on their jobs, which are important to their self-esteem. But they are more likely to change their feelings about work once they become mothers, and feel more conflict about their dual roles.

Chart 4

Parents Turning Down Jobs

Percent of employees with children citing reasons for refusing jobs



Source: Rodgers and Associates. Surveys conducted in 1985 and 1988.

Orthner's research finds that stress is increasing fastest for upper income groups. Because of their investment in work, managers have more fragile support networks making it more difficult to balance work demands with family demands. Emlen finds that upper-income families are more likely to have children caring for themselves, usually of school-age, and this leads to a variety of work-family problems.

Employees in lower level jobs, on the other hand, have less control over work hours and may suffer more serious consequences for absences and tardiness. They are also less likely to have access to telephones or the freedom to make personal calls. These employees appear more likely to worry more about their children or elders at work because they may be unable to purchase adequate care.

Lower-income employees are more likely to quit their jobs to care for aging relatives. People with higher incomes tend to be care-managers rather than caregivers of the elderly—they arrange and pay for care rather than provide it.[49] One study compares women who quit their jobs to become full-time caregivers with women who remained on the job while assuming elder care responsibilities. The working women came from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, were better educated, had higher-level jobs, and viewed their work as a career rather than just a job.[50]

The importance of career varies at different stages of the life cycle. According to one study: "The occupa-

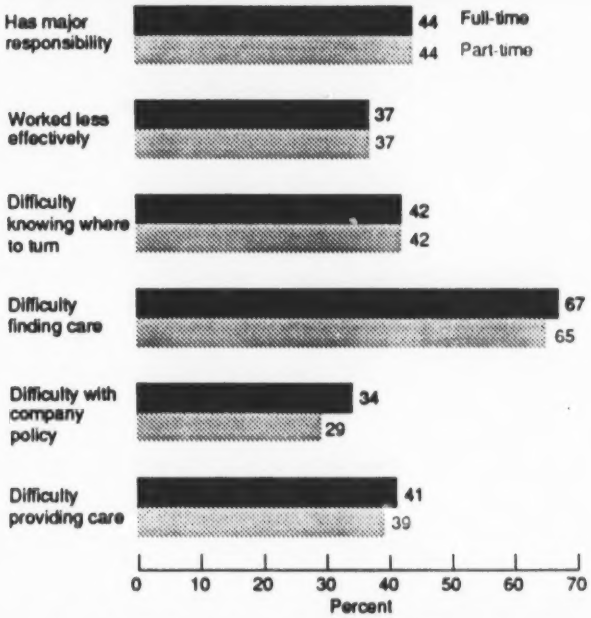
[49] American Association of Retired Persons. *A National Survey of Caregivers: Final Report*, Washington, D.C.: AARP, 1988.

[50] Elaine M. Brody, "Parent Care as a Normative Family Stress," *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1985.

Chart 5

Women Employees Caring for Adult Dependents

Percent of full and part-time employees reporting responsibilities and problems in providing elder care



Source: Arthur C. Emlen, Paul E. Koren, and Dianne Louise, 1987 Dependent Care Survey: Sister of Providence Final Report, Regional Research Institute, Portland State University.

tional orientation of men tends to relax somewhat during the late 30s and early 40s during which time they seek a greater balance between work and family." The focus groups conducted at Corning Inc. found that work-family needs and wants differ from decade to decade. The director of quality management at Corning Inc., concludes that women between the ages of 20 and 30 are primarily concerned with career advancement. Those between the ages of 30 and 40 focus more on children than career, while those aged 40 to 55 begin working on a career that may have plateaued.

Evans and Bartolome find that managers from ages 27 to 34 are most concerned with work and career. Between ages 35 and 42, family and leisure become more prominent. This is also the age when men are most likely to refuse to relocate. Over age 43, the balance between work and family is more stable. Some feel they missed out on their kids growing up. As Paul Sarbanes remarked when retiring early from Congress to be with his family: "No one was ever on their death bed saying they wished they had spent more time at the office." Other managers in this age group have plateaued in jobs that are stressful or routine. These managers are disengaged from the family as concern for work dominates because of the need to maintain job security until retirement.

It appears that as one moves up the hierarchy of an organization, the spillover from work to family increases. At lower job levels, however, the spillover may occur in the opposite direction, from family to work.

Full- and Part-Time Workers

The study at the 20 Sisters of Providence Hospitals in the Northwest is one of a few comparing large samples of full- and part-time workers. Almost a third of employees (29 percent) at the hospitals work part time. Although more women on average work part time than men, the difference in hours is even greater when the comparison is restricted to mothers and fathers.

Shorter work hours that allow more time at home reduce the cost of child care, but many child care programs do not accept children of part-timers. The Sisters of Providence study also found that child care stress is slightly greater for part-time mothers. For example, whereas mothers working full time can take a vacation day when their children are sick, the part-time mothers often do not have paid time off. Emlen concludes: "While part-time employment appears to diminish the financial burden of child care to some extent, it brings other problems which many employees find hard to solve."

Both part-time and full-time employees indicate similar levels of difficulty in finding and providing care, and a lessening of job effectiveness due to elder care responsibilities (see Chart 5). According to Emlen: "The pattern of similarities suggests that there is little point in differentiating full-time and part-time employees when addressing adult dependent care issues. While the differences found in the parallel child care analyses might reasonably be attributed to inflexibility in the child care market and other provider vicissitudes, the same factors do not appear to operate in the arena of adult dependent care. This is not to say that the difficulties encountered by employees in this area were minor; rather the main issues here are not as closely linked to the amount, variability, and scheduling of time on the job."

Specific Family Problems In the Workplace

As employees assume work and family responsibilities, specific areas of conflict are likely to emerge. The report now examines the impact of stress, pregnancy, child care, and elder care. While this review does not cover the entire work-family field, it focuses on issues that have been studied and areas in which workplace programs have been developed.

Stress

Stress is both a cause and a consequence of work-family conflict. While some stress is beneficial in stimulating productivity, it is also a growing health issue for business, leading to poor job performance, absenteeism, and a variety of health problems. The National Council on Compensation Insurance, which tracks activity in 32 states, contends that mental stress claims have increased fivefold in the past five years.[51] The American Medical Association estimates that 80 percent or more of medical problems are stress-related.[52] Numbers such as these lead some observers to put the toll of stress on society at $150 billion.

By examining the work-family components of stress, it is evident that problems often stem from the constancy and duration of strain rather than from the stress associated with a catastrophe or sudden change. While major events—such as having a baby, moving, and losing a promotion—are capable of creating stress, work-family concerns bring to human resources management a perspective on daily stresses and strains. Etzion warns of the danger of overlooking this more insidious form of stress: "It is claimed that continuous, hardly recognizable, and most denied misfits between personal characteristics and environmental demands are the source of a slow and hidden process of psychological erosion....The mini-stressors of misfits do not cause alarm and are rarely subjected to any coping efforts. Thus the process of erosion can go on for a long time without being detected."[53]

In a study of 86 upper middle-class working couples with children, Northwestern University researchers found different stress levels for men and women when faced with the prospect of restructuring their jobs to accommodate children. The women surveyed cut down on hours and travel and made more sacrifices than their husbands, but they seemed to take the changes in stride. The men made fewer changes, but had more difficulty managing the conflict.[54]

Research at 33 Oregon worksites found that between a third and two-thirds of employees reported some degree of stress, depending on the source and the responsibilities of the employee (see Table 5). For instance, employees caring for an aging relative experience more stress than parents with child care responsibilities. All populations report significantly higher stress levels related to their jobs than to caregiving or parenting.

In addition to jobs and caregiving, family finances were a source of stress for 39 percent of men and 54 percent of women in a University of Missouri study.

[51] "Mental Stress Exacts a Rising Toll in the Workplace," *Wall Street Journal*, Labor Letter, January, 1989.

[52] "Stress on the Job," *Newsweek*, April 25, 1988, pp. 40-48.

[53] Dahlia Etzion, op cit.

[54] *Newsweek*, op cit.

Table 5: Employees Reporting Stress Due to Work-Family Conflict

	All Employees	*All Men*	*All Women*
Sisters of Providence	54	NA	NA
33-company study:			
Due to child care	43	38	49
Due to elder care	52	42	63
Due to job	71	69	74

Emlen finds that, generally, the higher the income, the lower the stress related to child care. The University of Missouri study also reports that employees with out-of-home child care appear to have more stressful lives than employees with other child-care arrangements. In the *Fortune* magazine study, child-care breakdowns were associated with stress-related problems.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy and childbirth can create problems for employees and their jobs. Prenatal care is expensive and may require time away from work for visits. Most pregnant women experience some periods of fatigue or sickness which affect their work performance. All must stop work, even if for a few days, for delivery and convalescence. The costs of childbirth and neonatal care are expensive. And the worry about finding suitable infant care or about returning to work sooner than they are ready can have a negative effect on work performance.[55]

A 1986 Catalyst study found that women typically return to work within six months.[56] Women at the top and bottom of the salary scale tend to take shorter leaves of six to eight weeks. Lower paid women cannot afford to take unpaid leave, and high-earning women worry about jeopardizing the positions they have achieved. Anecdotal evidence provided to the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) by one large corporation that offers two months of unpaid leave following the period of disability, suggests that few women take advantage of the leave because it is unpaid. Less than one-half of women request any family leave following disability leave, and only one in five takes the full two months offered.[57]

T. Berry Brazelton, an influential pediatrician at Harvard Medical School, believes that a minimum of four months is necessary before mother and child are able to establish a secure, loving relationship. A child without that firm attachment may remain insecure in relationships throughout life, Brazelton contends. A mother who leaves her child before feeling that intimate bond is likely to carry guilt and longing with her to the job. Brazelton believes that such mothers experience "detachment" that negatively affects their work. Brazelton stated at a 1986 Conference Board Symposium on parental leave: "This detachment not only endangers her relationship with her baby and her mate, but also her relationship with herself and her feelings of competence, security, and independence. We know this detachment has gone on for a long time with fathers. We are ending up with people in the work force unable to work at full capacity."

In a series of interviews that Catalyst conducted among executive-level mothers, one group of women felt they had been pressured to return to work sooner than they were physically or emotionally ready. As a result, they felt over-extended and unable to manage either work or family responsibilities. Another group of executive women who felt better about the leaves they had taken were more satisfied with their lives and productivity at work. This group of mothers had more suitable child care arrangements and more supportive husbands. Catalyst points out that the level and intensity of the woman's job and work environment play a critical role as well.[58]

Among the 2,600 women participating in the NCJW study, 52 percent found that pregnancy made it more difficult to do their jobs, and more than half changed their work schedules or job responsibilities while pregnant as follows:

- 53 percent did less strenuous work;
- 46 percent worked fewer hours;
- 24 percent traveled less;
- 11 percent changed shifts; and
- 10 percent worked at home.

The quit rate for new mothers is considerably lower than commonly expected. Many managers seem to believe, or at least fear, that the majority of women on leave will not return to work after their period of leave. In the NCJW study, of the 1,117 women who were no longer on leave, only 14 percent had quit instead of returning to work after taking leave. A very similar finding was made by the General Accounting Office when estimating the costs of implementing the proposed Family and Medical Leave Act.[59] In its survey of firms, more than 84 percent of women taking leave returned to work within 10 weeks. A Rand Corporation study of women interviewed in 1983 found that 82 percent returned to work within the first three months after giving birth. Based on these findings, one could assume that of the 2.2 million women workers who gave birth or adopted children in 1986, approximately 1.8 million resumed their employment following their leave.[60]

[55] James T. Bond, *Accommodating Pregnancy in the Workplace*, New York: National Council on Jewish Women, November, 1987.

[56] *The Corporate Guide to Parental Leaves*, New York: Catalyst, 1986.

[57] Summary Statement of James T. Bond, Director, National Council of Jewish Women, Center for the Study of the Child, to U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations and on Labor Standards, March 5, 1987, p. 2.

[58] *Catalyst, Career and Family Center, Maternity and Parental Leaves of Absence*, New York: March, 1983, p. 7-8.

[59] U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Parental Leave: Estimated Costs of Human Resources 925, the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1987, Washington, D.C.: GAO/HRD 88-34, November, 1987, p. 13.*

[60] Arlene Leibowitz, Jacob Klerman, Linda Waite, Christina Witsberger, *Women's Employment During Pregnancy and Following Birth*, Palo Alto, California: The Rand Corporation, Prepared for presentation at Econometric Society, December, 1988.

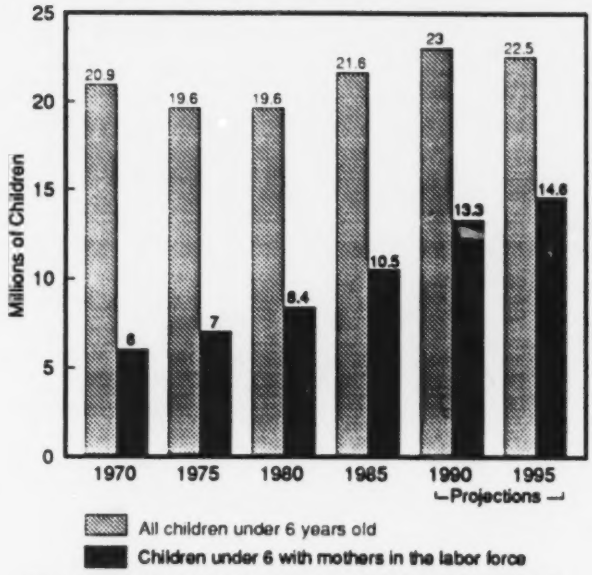
According to the Rand study, the later a woman leaves her job during pregnancy, the more likely she is to return to work after delivery. "Among the women who quit work in the first trimester of pregnancy, 14 percent returned to work in the first quarter after the birth. Of women who left work in the second trimester, 16 percent had returned in the first quarter. But among women who worked 27-37 weeks into their pregnancies, fully 40 percent returned to jobs in their first quarter after the birth."[61]

Another study found that women with some college, and those with greater amounts of work experience, leave the labor force later in their pregnancy and reenter sooner than women with less education or experience.[62] It would appear from these findings that professional women are more attached to their jobs and less likely to let parenthood stop their career pursuits. Although no data are available on the later careers of women who choose to stop working after childbirth, anecdotal evidence from companies suggests that these women focus on the family for a period of time and then eventually return to the paid labor force.

The most important predictor of retention following childbirth is the availability of job-guaranteed maternity leave. Evidence of this is reviewed in Part Two.

Chart 6

Preschool Children with Mothers in the Labor Force, 1970-1995



Source: Hofferth, S. "The Current Child Care Debate in Context," Bethesda, MD: National Institute of Child Health and Development, May, 1988.

Child Care

The limited supply and quality of affordable child care causes working parents to miss work or feel stressed about their children in someone else's care. According to government statistics, working parents constitute roughly 37 percent of the workforce. About 17 percent have preschoolers needing child care. This will increase in the next decade, since about three-fourths of working women are in their childbearing ages. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, most of these women will get pregnant during their working years and more than half will return to work before their child's first birthday.

While the preschool population is not expected to rise significantly during the 1990s, 40 percent more children will need care because their mothers are working. Sandra Hofferth of the Urban Institute predicts that by 1995 two-thirds of preschool children will have working mothers, up from about half today (see Chart 6).[63]

Of the 11.3 million children under age six whose mothers worked in 1985, almost half (48 percent) were in the care of relatives. Another 6 percent used in-home care, such as a nanny, au pair or housekeeper. The rest used out-of-home care by a nonrelative: 23 percent used a day care center or nursery school, and 22 percent relied on family day care, that is, a neighborhood woman caring for up to five children in her own home.[64] These rates indicate a decline in care by relatives and sitters in the home, small increases in family day care, and dramatic increases in center-based care (see Chart 7, page 28).

In 1986, there were an estimated 63,000 child care centers, of which 40,000 were in operation. These centers had a capacity of approximately 2.1 million children. The number of centers has doubled over the past 10 years.

The number of family day care homes is more difficult to estimate because a sizable portion of them—somewhere between 50 and 90 percent—are unlicensed. In 1986, there were 165,000 licensed homes, of which 105,000 were in operation. These homes had a capacity to serve a half million children. Since 1977, licensed family day care homes increased by about one-third.[65]

[61] Ibid.

[62] Steven D. McLaughline, "Differential Patterns of Female Labor-Force Participation Surrounding the First Born," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 44, 1982, pp. 407-420.

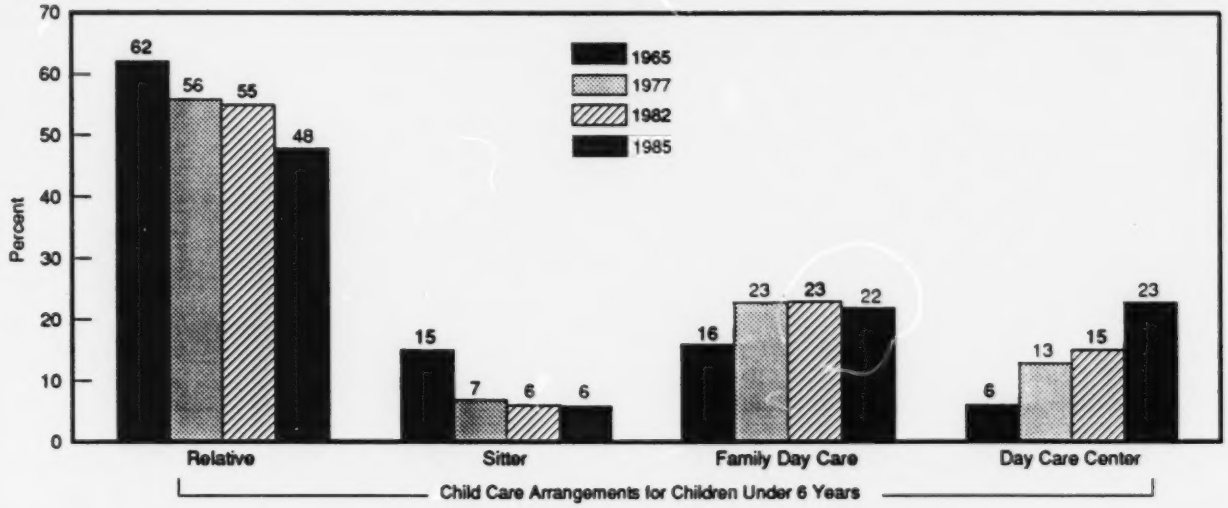
[63] Sandra L. Hofferth, "What is the Demand for and Supply of Child Care in U.S.?," Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, Testimony presented before House Committee on Education and Labor, 1989.

[64] Sandra L. Hofferth, ibid.

[65] For estimates of child care supply, see Ellen Eliason Kisker, Rebecca Maynard, Anne Gordon, and Margaret Strain, *The Child Care Challenge: What Parents Need and What is Available in Three Metropolitan Areas?*, Princeton, New Jersey: Mathematical Policy Research, Inc., 1989, p. 5; William R. Prosser, *Day Care Centers: 1976-1984*, Social Services Policy Technical Analysis Paper, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1986; Patricia Divine-Hawkins, *Family Day Care in the United States: National Day Care Home Study Executive Summary*, DHHS Publication No. 80-30287, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Sandra L. Hofferth and Deborah A. Phillips, "Child Care in the United States, 1970-1995," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 49, August 87, pp. 559-571.

Chart 7

Care of Preschool Children, 1965-1985



Source; Hofferth, Sandra L., "What is the Demand for and Supply of Child Care in the U.S.?" (Testimony before the House Committee on Education and Labor), February 9, 1989, The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C.

Hofferth estimates that with these 2.6 million licensed slots (in centers and family day care homes), about half of the 5.3 million children using out-of-home, nonrelative care are in unlicensed programs. She concludes that the shortage may, in fact, be a deficiency of *licensed* slots.

A child care shortage indicates that parents will have difficulty finding care, which may result in a search requiring time at work to make phone calls or time away from work to make visits. It may also result in a child care selection that is less than satisfactory or too expensive, adding either emotional or financial strain. These daily strains coupled with the emergencies created by sick children, sick providers, or child care breakdowns lead to employee absences—a point at which most child care problems meet the bottom line.

Absenteeism

Various child care problems may result in full-day or part-day absences. In the *Fortune* study, about 39 percent of parents had come to work late or left early, with 20 percent doing so three or more times in the past three months. Of those who missed part of the work day, 72 percent had been absent because of family obligations. A survey at Allstate Insurance Company found that almost half (49 percent) of parents had been late or left early at least 5 times during the 3 months prior to participating in the survey due to child care problems.

On average, employees arrive late or leave early due to family obligations about 1.8 days every 6 months. Women have twice as many latenesses or early departures as men (women average 2.4 days among 5 companies; the men average 1.2 days). Home care is associated with the least disruption at work. Out-of-home child care is associated with being late, leaving early, and missing days. According to Emlen and Koren, the greatest disruption results from children looking after themselves.

In a study at Adolph Coors Company, 77 parents reported missing 230 days in a 6-month period, or 460 days per year, due to child care problems: 146 days (63 percent) were absences due to sick children; 65 days (28 percent) to child care; and 19 days (8 percent) to breakdowns in child care (see Table 6).

Sick Children

Childhood illness is a major cause of unavoidable employee absence. Children under the age of 12 average 5 days of sickness per year. The 1990 National Child Care Survey found that about half (51 percent) of employed mothers who reported that their child was sick in the last month missed work to care for that child. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents to the *Fortune* study reported that finding care for a sick child was a serious problem. Fernandez observes that sick child care heads the list among 15 possible child care problems, especially for women who typically are the ones to stay home with a sick child.

Parents resort to a variety of strategies to take time off for sick children. At one large hospital, 36 percent

Table 6: Absenteeism and Child Care Problems

Percent of parents missing work and number of days absent due to child care problems.

	Percent who Missed Work	*Total Days Missed*	*Men*	*Women*
Company A (pharmaceutical)			.4	1.1
Company B (financial services)			.6	1.5
Company C (home products mfr.)			1.1	1.6
Company D (pharmaceutical)			.4	1.1
Coors:				
Due to sick children	63%	4.6[1]		
Looking for child care	28	6.2[2]		
Company E (high technology)		1.76		
Company F (computer)			1.0[3]	2.9[3]
Sick children			.5	1.7
Doctor's appointment			.3	.8
Child care problem			0	.1
33-company study		6.92	6.08	7.79
Sisters of Providence	31[4]			
Company G (insurance)	19[5]			

[1] Based on 53 employees; 55 Coors employees missed an average of 2.6 days per 6 months. Number equals total days missed over 6-month period.
[2] Based on 14 employees.
[3] Includes parents with children under 6.
[4] Percent absent at least once in previous month.
[5] Percent absent 4 days or more in previous 6 months.

of parents took a day off without pay, another 30 percent took a personal sick day, and 24 percent took vacation. At the 33-company study in Oregon, 50 percent of the parents took a vacation day. Among full-time workers, women were far more likely than men to take a day without pay to care for a sick child (24 percent compared to 4 percent of fathers). Men were more likely to take a personal sick day (24 percent compared to 13 percent of women).

Whether a parent stays home with a sick child depends on the nature of the illness, the availability of backup support, and the personal inclinations of the parents. In a study at Manville Corporation, among 17 percent of employees who had lost time from work due to sick children, two-thirds said they did not want their children home alone. Another fourth did not know a provider, and over a fifth could not afford one. It is clear that the value one places on certain family relationships and responsibilities will affect job motivation and, ultimately, the employee's choice between going to work or staying at home. The Coors study concluded: "Based on self-disclosed survey results, employees with children miss two to three days every 6 months due to sick children. If 47 percent of our Coors employees have children needing child care and 47 percent of these employees miss 2 to 3 days of work because of sick children, a metro-Denver employee population of 8,000 employees (including all Coors companies), means approximately 3,530 to 5,300 work days are missed every 6 months, or 7,060 to 10,600 days a year. At an average wage of $120/day, sick child absenteeism costs Coors $847,200 to $1,272,000 a year! Add the cost of replacement employees and reduced productivity, and sick child cost to the company is even higher."

Finding Child Care

Emlen found that employed mothers with children under age 12 who report difficulty finding child care are twice as likely as other mothers to make arrangements with which they are dissatisfied. They are also twice as likely to report worry or stress about child care, twice as likely to say that combining work and family responsibilities is difficult, and many times more likely to feel that child care is difficult to continue or maintain. These difficulties reach the workplace in the form of lost time and stress.

The match between local supply and local demand determines how difficult the child care search will be. Also, the type of care sought makes a difference. In one company survey, 79 percent of parents had problems finding care for their sick child, 60 percent reported a difficult search for infant care, 54 percent reported difficulty locating school-age care, and 39 percent said child care for their preschoolers was hard to find. Mothers typically report more difficulty finding care than

Table 7: Difficulty Finding Child Care

Percent of parents reporting difficulty finding child care.

	Total	*Fathers*	*Mothers*
Sister of Providence Hospitals	64%	NA	NA
3 New Jersey firms	54	NA	NA
Large Northeast pharmaceutical firm	50	42%	53%
33-company survey, Oregon	46	37	56
Large Midwest insurance company	36	NA	NA
Large East Coast computer company	30	NA	NA
New Jersey pharmaceutical firm	NA	56	71
Apparel manufacturer	67	NA	NA
Law firm	42	NA	NA

fathers (see Table 7). Studies also link higher absence rates to difficulties in finding child care.

Breakdowns in the System

Child care breakdowns are likely to occur when the care is of poor quality or when the arrangement relies on one caregiver (as in family day care or in-home care) who has been incapacitated. The number of arrangements that parents use to cover their work hours, the form of the care and the quality of the care all influence the reliability of the child care service. Parents often use several arrangements to cover their varying needs. Based on several corporate surveys, the average number of arrangements that parents make is consistently reported at about 1.7.

Of the 2,300 employed mothers studied in the National Child Care Survey, 15 percent reported some lost time from work, and 6 percent reported lost days from work during the past month because of child care breakdowns. These women were out of work an average of 1.58 times during the last month (where one time may represent several days missed from work). This figure may be inflated since interviews were held during the winter months when "snow days" are a problem for working parents.

The *Fortune* survey found that a third of the parents who experienced child care breakdowns were nervous or stressed often or very often, as compared to 17 percent of those who do not have trouble maintaining their child care arrangements.

The Affordability of Care

The inability to pay for quality care can result in problems at work. Emlen concluded in his 33-company study in Oregon: "Employees with child care affordability problems have less money and are frustrated in their expectations. They are willing to pay more for child care, but what they are looking for is harder to find, and they end up less satisfied with what they do find."

In national samples, child care expenses account for 10 percent of family income, or about 25 percent of the mother's wages (see Chart 8). Shinn reports that in actual dollars, two-paycheck families paid the most for child care, but after controlling for family income and other demographic factors, single mothers paid a larger share.

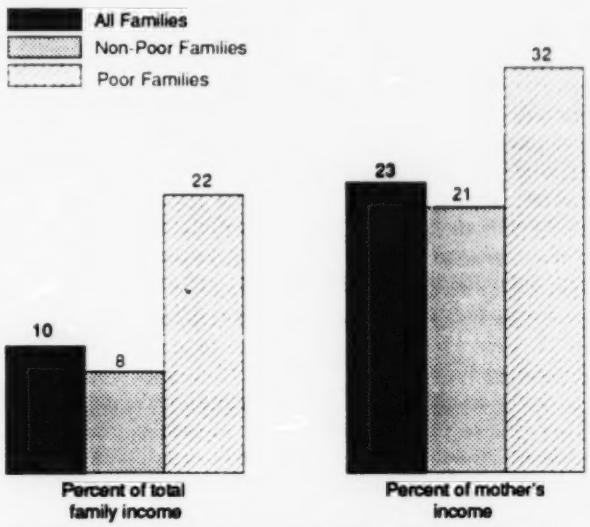
Affordability is a serious problem for lower-income families who pay as much as 25 percent of their family incomes on child care. Yet one study found that few parents would select alternative arrangements because of cost. In a 1988 national survey by *USA Today*, 50 percent of those wanting to change their arrangements mentioned reasons of quality, compared to 19 percent for convenience, and only 3 percent for cost. Hofferth draws the following conclusion: "Cost is not the biggest source of stress for parents; rather quality issues are very high on the list."

Elder Care

As with child care, the problems associated with elder care are largely the result of inadequacies in the social services available in the community. The complexity and duration of caregiving often increase stress

Chart 8

Average Weekly Expenditures on Child Care as a Percent of Income



Source: Hofferth, S. "The Current Child Care Debate in Context," Bethesda, MD; National Institute of Child Health and Development, May, 1988.

Table 8: Prevalence of Elder Caregiving

	Percent of Employees with Some Responsibility
Company A (insurance)	12%
Company B (military contractor)	25
Company C (insurance)	20
Company D (insurance)	34
3-company study (Bridgeport, CT)	25
Company E (computer)	30
Company F (20 hospitals)	22*
	with Major Responsibility
Company G (law firm)	8%
Company H (pharmaceutical)	7
Company I (pharmaceutical)	5
Company J (financial planning)	6
Company K (pharmaceutical/ home care products)	8
Company L (apparel manufacturer)	8

*Range among 20 hospitals was 11-33 percent.

levels, absenteeism, and quit rates beyond those caused by child care.

Contrary to popular belief, children have not abandoned the elderly: Only five percent of the population over 65 are in nursing homes, and 75 percent of senior citizens live with or near their families. According to the National Council on the Aging, approximately 6.6 million dependent elders, who may or may not be disabled, are over age 65 and have some need for assistance from others. This number will reach 9 million by the end of the century. As the baby boomers become elderly, 19 million people will become dependent by the year 2040.[66] More employees will have dependent elders in the 21st century than dependent children. Employees may also have more parents (including in-laws) than children.

Between 10 and 34 percent of any given employee group has some responsibility for an aging relative. "Major" caregiving is provided by less than 8 percent of workers (see Table 8). Many employees who have elder care responsibilities care for more than one adult. In the national sample surveyed by the American Association of Retired Persons and Opinion Research Corporation (AARP-ORC), 25 percent of caregivers were responsible for more than one adult dependent. The Travelers Companies found that 19 percent of caregivers were providing care for more than one person. At the Sisters of Providence hospitals in the Northwest, one-third of employees reported caring for more than one adult.

The responsibilities that caregivers assume while working range from daily transportation to looking for a nursing home (see Table 9). Employees spend about 12 hours per week providing this care. At The Travelers—and at many other companies—women are more likely to be the primary caregivers, spending 16 hours per

[66] Michael Creedon, (ed.) *Issues for an Aging America: Employees and Elder Care*, University of Bridgeport: Center for the Study of Aging, 1986.

Table 9: Types of Elder Care Responsibilities

Percent of employees reporting elder care support provided, by type.

	University of Bridgeport	*AARP*	*Travelers*	*33-company, Oregon*	*Caregivers of Frail Elderly*
Transportation	74%	79%	62%		
Arranging appointments	64		36	7%	
Providing meals	66	68			
Grocery shopping		82			86%
Visiting/phone	54		76	73	
Home maintenance	54	75	57		81
Personal care	30		15	32	67
Administering medicine		45			53
Managing finances		65	44	10	49
Filling out forms	62				
Searching for new residence	10				
Providing money	63		30		

Table 10: Hours of Elder Caregiving Provided

	Average Number of Hours per Week per Employee
AARP	10
Travelers	10.2
Travelers (Buffalo)	8.5
Pharmaceutical	15
Computer firm	16
Family Survival Project	35*

* Refers to brain-injured elders, and includes some caregivers who are not employed.

week performing these duties, whereas men reported an average of 5.3 hours (see Table 10).

Available Services

According to the National Council on the Aging, about 2,100 adult day care centers were in operation in 1989. Inadequate funding has slowed their growth. Few private medical insurance companies cover the cost of adult day care centers, which can run $12 to $50 a day. Medicaid is available to families for health-oriented facilities that meet state requirements, but only when the elderly person is in a formal institution and is poor. Medicare does not cover nursing-home care (except convalescent care in a skilled facility following a hospitalization), long-term care, private-duty nursing, or prescriptions needed after hospital treatments. Recent efforts to offer long-term care insurance to employees and their dependents often require prior hospitalization. Companies typically require employees to pay the full premium.[67]

Ongoing costs of providing elder care do not appear onerous, unless a long-term illness is involved. In the national AARP-ORC sample, full-time employees assume average monthly caregiving costs of $107. Previously employed caregivers and those who never worked pay more. Those with lower household incomes pay a higher percentage of their incomes on expenses related to caregiving. Fewer than 10 percent of the AARP-ORC respondents report hiring someone to provide respite care or in-home nursing support.

Respite care is an important dimension of elder care. Most company studies show that employees have been providing care for an average of five years. In the AARP-ORC survey, 28 percent had been unable to take a vacation in 2 years. At The Travelers, 18 percent of the caregivers had not had a vacation from caregiving for more than 2 years, and another 10 percent had not been away in the past year.

Having the relative live in another city or state from the employed caregiver is a frequent complication of caring for the elderly. In a 5-company study by AARP, 35 percent of caregivers had some responsibility for relatives living more than 100 miles away. At the Sisters of Providence hospitals, 22 percent of caregivers lived over 100 miles from their elderly relatives, and 27 percent of Travelers' caregivers had relatives living more than 50 miles away. As many employees using the nationwide elder care referral services sponsored by Work/Family Elder Directions are as likely to have relatives living close by as ones who are 100 or more miles away. Employees who must negotiate complicated arrangements from a distance are less able to respond immediately to emergencies. These employees report significantly higher stress and costs associated with purchasing care than employees whose relatives live nearby.

Caregiver Profile

The AARP-ORC study found that caregivers working full time are typically college-educated men from more affluent households. As a rule, they assume a secondary rather than a primary caregiving role because they are more likely to care for a "healthier" family member who is living independently. Nonworking caregivers, on the other hand, tend to have more demanding caregiving roles.

The effects of elder care on work performance depend, in part, on the severity of the elder's affliction. In the Family Survival Project study of 284 primary caregivers of brain-impaired relatives, half were employed and half were not. As in the AARP-ORC study, employed caregivers were younger and more affluent. They had paid help for 16 more hours per week, but spent 35 hours per week in their caregiving role. They also cared for relatives who were younger by nearly six years.

In The Travelers' survey, a major illness or injury most frequently precipitated the need for care of the elderly person. Hospitalization and death of a spouse were the next most common events leading to a caregiving role. Being laid off or fired from a job was the reason in 3 percent of the cases. About one-third of The Travelers' caregivers had problems with vision, swollen legs, hearing impairments, arthritis, depression, hypertension, and memory loss. Very few had serious diseases such as cancer, Parkinson's disease, stroke, or diabetes.

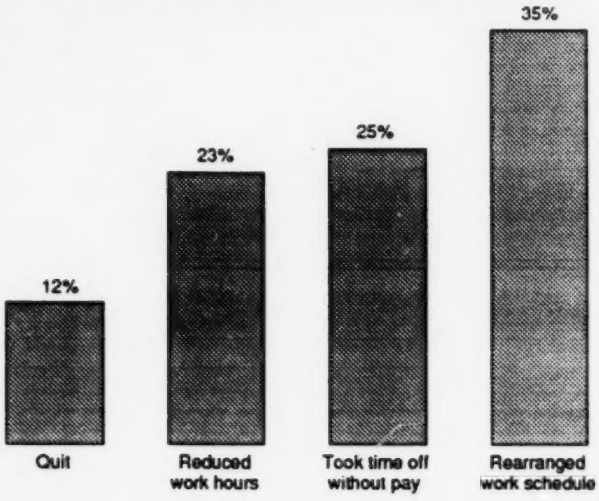
Little is known about what determines the dimensions of the employed caregiver's role. The cost of institutionalization, when compared with the salary of the caregiver, is undoubtedly a factor in the decision. The flexibility of the job, the value of the work, and the level of stress experienced by the individual employee are additional considerations. Without this information, the retention effects of certain elder care programs remain speculative.

[67] Dana E. Friedman, "Elder Care: The Employee Benefit of the 1990's?" *Across the Board*, June 1986, pp. 45-51.

Chart 9

The Impact of Elder Care on Women Workers

Percent of all working women with elder care responsibilities who:



Source: Robyn Stone, Gail Lee Cafferata, and Judith Sangl, *Caregivers of the Frail Elderly: A National Profile*, National Centers for Health Services Research and Health Care Technology Assessment, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., 1982.

Stress and Productivity

Effects on work performance are due primarily to the degree of stress associated with combining work and caregiving, the sensitivity of the supervisor, and the flexibility in work schedules. The adequacy of the support services available to the employee may be a factor as well. One survey found 55 percent of caregivers reporting difficulty in finding elder care services, while 67 percent of caregivers in another survey were frustrated in their search for elder care. More than one-third reported difficulty providing care or difficulty knowing where to turn for help. These problems lead to time at work on the phone which 64 percent of managers in the New York Business Group on Health (NYBGH) survey observed to be a problem. About 57 percent of the caregivers in the Buffalo study concurred.

On an average, 45 percent of caregivers report working less effectively due to worry about their elder care responsibilities. In a Wall Street law firm, 48 percent of caregivers felt their elder care responsibilities distracted them and negatively affected their productivity. The Buffalo office of The Travelers found that 28 percent of caregivers reported low morale due to caregiving.

Caregivers who quit their jobs to give care, and employees with less than half-time jobs, experience the highest levels of stress in the Family Survival Project survey. The study concludes: "These caregivers seem to have lost the respite from caregiving that outside employment can provide, and tend to be in onerous caregiving roles." Caregivers who work a 40-hour week also experience high levels of stress when economic limitations prohibit obtaining adequate paid caregiving help. In the NYBGH survey of 68 company managers, almost three-fifths reported observing an increase in stress due to elder care responsibilities among employees.[68]

A two-year study at the University of Michigan School of Nursing found that caregivers are three times more likely than the elderly relatives they care for to report symptoms of depression and four times more likely to report anger.[69] Studies at Duke University's Center on Aging found that 33 percent of persons caring for relatives with Alzheimer's disease use prescription drugs for depression, tension and sleep disorders. The comparable figure in the general population is 10 percent. Furthermore, 22 percent of the caregivers use alcohol daily to sleep or relax.[70]

The AARP-ORC study found that time spent on caregiving may create stress by leaving less time for leisure activities, as 51 percent reported. One-third spent less time with other family members (34 percent) or neglected their own health (33 percent).

Absenteeism and Availability for Work

Managers believe that employees reduce their work hours more than reported to care for an elderly relative. In two studies, fewer than 5 percent of caregivers admitted to reducing their hours. However, in the two studies of managers by Retirement Advisors and the New York Business Group on Health, 32 percent and 46 percent respectively, perceived employees to be cutting back on hours worked.[71]

The National Long Term Care study found that 29 percent of all caregivers (35 percent of women) had rearranged their schedules to accommodate elder care demands. Again, a discrepancy exits between employee and manager reports of schedule modifications. Between 9 and 19 percent of employees report taking unscheduled days off for caregiving. Yet, between 41 and 75 percent of managers thought that employees were taking off such time (see Chart 9 above and Table 11 on page 34).

In the AARP-ORC study, 33 percent of employees reported coming in late or leaving early due to elder care responsibilities. In the 33-company study in Oregon,

[68] Leon J. Warshaw and staff, *Employer Support for Employee Caregivers*, New York: New York Business Group on Health, 1986.

[69] Friedman, op cit.

[70] Friedman, op cit.

[71] Warshaw, op cit; and *Elder Care in the Workplace: Corporate Employee and Retirement Implications*, Retirement Advisors, New York: 1986.

Table 11: Effects of Elder Care Responsibilities

	Caregivers								*Managers*	
	AARP-ORC [1]	*Oregon 33-company* [2] *All*	*Men*	*Women*	*Sisters of Providence* [3] *Women*	*Elderlink* [4] *Women*	*Travelers* [5] *Buffalo*	*Caregivers of Frail Elderly* [6]	*Family Survival Project* [7]	*Retirement Advisors* [8]	*NYBGH* [9]
Reduced hours	4	3	2	4				21		32	46
Rearranged schedule								29			
Come in late/ leave early	33									45	73
Unscheduled days off	9							19		41	75
Delayed retirement										30	
Quit/considered quitting						23		9	22		
Work less effectively due to stress		31	22	38	37	34	30		58	57	60
Low morale										28	17
Excessive phone calls										57	64
Conflict between work and family		28				77	85				
Difficulty finding care		55	48	61	67						
Difficulty providing care		36	31	41	41						
Don't know where to go for help		41	39	44	42						

[1] American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), *A National Survey of Caregivers: Final Report*, Washington, D.C.: AARP, 1988.

[2] *Employee Profiles: 1987 Dependent Care Survey, Selected Companies*, Oregon: Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, 1987.

[3] Arthur C. Emlen, Paul E. Koren, and Dianne Louise, *1987 Dependent Care Survey: Sisters of Providence, Final Report*, Oregon: Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, 1987.

[4] G. Borison, *Elderlink: The Corporate Program at Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services: A Link Between the Community and the Private Sector. A Final Report*. Somerville, Massachusetts: Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, 1985.

[5] Gary D. Brice, David Carstense, and Marlen Kwiatkowski, *A Profile of the Travelers Insurance Company, Buffalo Office, Employee Caregivers to Older Adults*, University of Buffalo School of Social Work, 1987.

[6] Robyn Stone, Gail Lee Caffetata, Judith Sangl, *Caregivers of the Frail Elderly, A National Profile*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1986.

[7] Robert B. Enright and Lynn R. Friss, *Employed Caregivers of Brain-Impaired Adults: An Assessment of the Dual Roles*, San Francisco, California: Family Survival Project, 1986.

[8] *Elder Care in the Workplace: Corporate Employee and Retirement Implications*, Retirement Advisors, New York: 1986.

[9] Leon J. Warshaw and staff, *Employer Support for Employee Caregivers*, New York: New York Business Group on Health, 1986.

caregivers were late 14.4 times per year (19 times for women and 10 times for men). Managers generally perceived these absences to be more frequent.

Among 4 surveys of employed caregivers, the average number of days missed due to elder care concerns was 7.5 per year (see Table 12). About 43 percent of the managers in the Retirement Advisors study and 67 percent in the NYBGH survey had observed increased absences among employees due to elder care.

Turnover

Extensive elder care responsibilities may lead employees to quit their jobs. Among the caregivers interviewed in the AARP-ORC study who were formerly employed, 15 percent chose early retirement and 12 percent gave up work entirely as a result of caregiving. In the Long-Term Care survey, 29 percent had considered quitting, while 9 percent of all caregivers (12 percent of women) actually quit. The figure was 12 percent for daughters of aging parents. A study at the Philadelphia Geriatric Center found a 12-percent quit rate among elder caregivers. In the Elderlink study, about 23 percent of female caregivers at Wang Laboratories had considered quitting because of elder care demands, while 22 percent of full-time working women in the Sisters of Providence hospital network did leave their jobs to care for a family member.

Table 12: Absenteeism Due to Elder Care

Study	*Average Number of Days Absent per Employee*	*Percent of Employees Absent*
33-company, Oregon	7.63	24%
Family Survival Project 9.3 hrs. per month	14	55
Computer (5 times per year; 35 hours per year)	4	
High technology	2.2	
Computer	.3	
Travelers (Buffalo)	4.5	50
Retirement advisors (percent of managers observing increased absence)		43
New York Business Group on Health		67

Work and Family In a Benefits Context

In evaluating programs, important insights can be gained by examining management theories about the purpose of benefits and their perceived capacity to improve productivity and performance.

As employee benefits costs escalate, employers are increasingly questioning their value in the compensation package. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the average cost of benefits in 1987 reached $10,708 per employee, or 39 percent of payroll.[72] The Council on Employee Benefits predicted that percent could rise to 56 percent of payroll by the year 2000.[73]

Fringe benefits, particularly those that require employees to build up seniority in order to be eligible for them, are generally adopted to keep or attract labor—in other words, for the purpose of increasing productivity by reducing turnover costs. Some benefits specialists contend that morale and loyalty is improved by the voluntary provision of fringe benefits. Other experts disagree with this original intent of benefits or with the idea that such productivity enhancements through benefit provision are possible today. At a 1989 meeting of The Conference Board's Work and Family Research Council, Gary Pines, principal of TPF&C, a benefits consulting firm, commented that benefits provide short-term protection and long-term security. In his view, benefits do not tend to motivate employees to improve their productivity.

Motivators or Satisfiers?

Classic management theories suggest the presence of *motivators*, job characteristics that cause people to work harder, and *satisfiers*, which make the job more agreeable. While motivators appear more closely related to productivity, satisfiers are important for retention, but do not necessarily make people perform better.

According to the theories developed by Fredrick Herzberg in the 1950s—on whose work modern assumptions are based—motivators typically involve elements that are intrinsic to the job, such as "a good chance for advancement," "a great deal of responsibility," and "a say in important decisions." Satisfiers include good benefits and working conditions, and flexible hours.[74] Herzberg assumed that these latter conditions are important to workers, but will not motivate them to be more productive. Yet Herzberg found that benefits had the ability to make people feel dissatisfied and perform poorly. Inadequate satisfiers can reduce productivity; but even at an optimum level, they cannot increase productivity. He concludes: "The opposite of job satisfaction is not dissatisfaction and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but no job dissatisfaction."

In a 1987 survey of 183 employees in a Midwest health facility, 82 percent of the respondents viewed fringe benefits as important, and 65 percent said that benefits influenced their decision to stay with the organization. Only 18 percent believed that the benefits helped recruit them to the organization. The study also found, to the surprise of the authors, that benefits were perceived as a strong motivating influence on employees.[75] Retention, however, was thought to be most affected, confirming Herzberg's theory that satisfiers help keep people, but casting doubt on the assumption that they are not capable of motivating them.

According to Herzberg's theory, company provision of family-supportive benefits will maintain, but not in-

[72] *Pension Reporter*, (December 19, 1988), Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs, p. 2167.

[73] Fred K. Foulkes, (Ed.), *Employee Benefits Handbook*, Boston: Warren Gorham and Lamont, 1987, p. 6.

[74] Fredrick Herzberg, "One More Time: How do you Motivate Employees," *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, 1968, pp. 53-62.

[75] Thomas J. Bergmann and Marilyn A. Bergmann, "How Important are Fringe Benefits to Employees?," *Personnel*, December, 1987, pp. 59-64.

crease, productivity by preventing productivity loss. This theory, though plausible, is untested among today's workers—baby boomers with different values from those of prior generations, and more women, whose needs and expectations differ as well. For instance, the employer-employee contract is less viable; employees are more committed to their careers than to a particular firm; people want more leisure time and seem willing to make sacrifices to achieve a better quality of life. These and other profound changes in the value orientation of today's workers justify skepticism for theories developed about yesterday's workers.

New Values

In tracing the nation's collective psyche over the past 30 years, Florence Skelly, a recognized pollster formerly associated with Daniel Yankelovich, describes the 1950s as a period of upward mobility, puritan tradition and self-denial—denial of the individual in favor of conformity and denial of current desires for the future. The 1960s brought in the era of self-fulfillment and self-discovery. Economic realism, a revived commitment to the free enterprise system, a shift from government to business as an agent of social change, more interest in the future as the baby boomers grew older, and respect for pluralism, all characterize the decade of the 1980s. Skelly predicts: "If this notion of commitment to increased profits starts to become a predominant force, if the erosion of the egalitarian spirit continues, and if there is more fear in the contract employers make with their workers, I think the definition of benefits will be less clear. Rather, benefits will increasingly be used as incentives for performance. This is a very different kind of use than we have traditionally seen."[76]

These psychological changes have important implications for the eventual provision of family-supportive benefits and employee responses to those benefits. For instance, if employers can recognize and accept diversity within the employee population, companies are then free to acknowledge the different needs among workers and respond accordingly. The company culture, managers, and employees are learning that equity has a new meaning.

Benefits were primarily intended to support catastrophic events, rather than the day-to-day drudgeries of life. Corporations have been generous in their efforts to protect employees from future and immediate disaster. But they are slow to understand the value of benefits in reducing daily tensions and ongoing personal problems.

Employee Expectations

The ability for employee benefits to yield a return depends on whether the program or policy is well designed and implemented and has adequate financial backing; whether it has been properly communicated so that employees know how to use it; and whether there is a commitment to the program throughout management ranks. For instance, an on-site day care center that one supervisor thinks is a waste of money may not yield the maximum return on investment for the employees reporting to that supervisor. Paternity leaves with perceived negative sanctions will never be taken.

Perhaps the most important factor in the effectiveness of company-provided benefits is whether they are expected, desired or needed by employees. Given the demographic changes and the work-family conflicts outlined earlier, some justification has been presented for company support. And based on several national polls that document rising expectations, employers are under pressure to respond to employees' child care needs (see Table 13). More companies are becoming concerned about employee dissatisfaction if these expectations are not met.

The New Demand

Since work-family issues first surfaced about a decade ago, employees have remained reluctant to express their family-related concerns at work. But increased corporate support to families, media coverage on the issue, and the labor shortage that makes it an employees' market, have encouraged employees to begin to speak up. Sensing this growing expectation and the desire to better understand the needs of today's workers, companies are adding questions to attitude surveys and environmental scans in order to find out what employees want. Focus groups and specialized needs assessments are conducted to gather more information about the needs of employees and their families.

In a review of eight company needs assessments where employees were asked to rank the company programs that would be most beneficial to them, the responses show an overwhelming preference for increased flexibility in work hours. Employees in six of the eight firms cited flexible work arrangements as a top priority. A revision of sick time policy was the second most frequently requested change, mentioned by five of the employee groups, twice as a top priority. Employees were specifically interested in being allowed to take time off for a sick family member. At one firm, flexible work hours were considered the most important option by the entire employee population. But when the question was asked only of working parents, revisions in sick leave prevailed.

The on- or near-site child care center was the third preference, followed by training supervisors to become more sensitive to family issues and half-day vacations. It is interesting to note that child care centers, despite extensive publicity about this very tangible benefit (and

[76] *America in Transition: Implications for Employee Benefits*, Employee Benefits Research Institute, Washington, D.C., 1982, p. 75.

Table 13: Expectations of Employer Support for Child Care (Based on Public Opinion Polls)

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll
January 29 - February 8, 1988
800 adults, New Jersey sample

"Some people feel that employers should help provide child care for their employees because they benefit from having working parents in the labor force. Others think the responsibility for child care is the parents' alone. Do you think employers should or should not help provide child care?"

Employers should provide	67%
Should not	26
Depends/Don't know	7

Fortune Magazine
June, 1987

"Would you like companies to provide a subsidized child care center?"

	Men	*Women*
Yes	38%	54%
No	62	46

Fingerhut/Granados/Service Employees International Union
May, 1987
724 registered voters, national sample

"I think employers should bear at least some of the cost of child care programs."

Agree a lot	35%
Agree a little	25
Disagree a little	14
Disagree a lot	23
Don't know	4

"Working parents are more productive at work when they know their children have good child care arrangements."

Agree a lot	85%
Agree a little	11
Disagree a little	-
Disagree a lot	-
Don't know	2

Yankelovich Clancy Shulman/*Time* Magazine
September, 1986
1,014 adults, national sample

"Do you think it should be a policy of business to provide day care facilities for the children of employees?"

	Total	*Men*	*Women*
Yes	51%	46%	56%
No	39	46	34
Depends	7		
Not sure	3		

Roper Organization
October - November, 1985
1,998 adults, national sample

"Tell me whether it should be the responsibility of business to provide or pay part of the cost of day care for child care of employees who are mothers."

Definite responsibility	9%
Highly desirable	24
Nice but not expected	40
Beyond what they should do	25
Don't know	

employee visions of free, high quality child care), were not ranked highest. The preference instead was for flexible hours and sick leave, which are considered to be relatively low-cost benefits. One explanation from The Conference Board's Work and Family Research Council is that flexibility may be harder to create in some corporate environments than building a child care center.

Specific Work-Family Programs

Research on specific work-family programs and their ability to reduce the negative effects of work-family conflict is limited. Sufficient research exists, however, on child care programs, flextime, employee assistance plans, and parental leave policies to gauge some of their impact. How effective one initiative is over another in addressing specific problems, or what cumulative effect might occur when several initiatives are provided simultaneously is not known, due largely to the lack of research evaluating initiatives implemented by various employers.

Employer-Sponsored Child Care Centers

Of all the ways for companies to address the needs of working parents, the on- or near-site child care center has received the most attention. A center involves a significant commitment of funds and resources. It is the most tangible option—easiest for nonparent decision makers to grasp; easiest for newspapers to photograph; but apparently not easy to study. Very few studies evaluate employer-sponsored centers, and none compares company-owned centers to those contracted out. Very few analyses are pure in their methods and realistic in their conclusions. The strong consistency of the findings, however, lends weight to their credibility. Based on the most relevant data available, a child care center sponsored by an employer can affect the bottom line—not as much as expected, and not in the ways managers predict—but with a certain payback. Research suggests that reduced turnover and improved recruitment may be the most positive benefits of work-site child care centers.

Of the 16 studies[77] reviewed (see box on page 41), six are experimental in nature, comparing the center users with a "control group" of employees who did not use the center. Control groups include users of other child care services, nonparents, or employees of a similar company without a child care center. The matching of samples is important to make sure that other differences between groups—besides the use of the center—are responsible for the variation in outcomes. In some cases, these groups were surveyed up to a year before the center opened and

[77] D.N. Krug, V.E. Palmour, and M.C. Ballassai (1972), *Office of Economic Opportunity Child Development Center*, Westat, Inc., Rockville, Maryland.

G.T. Milkovich and L.R. Gomez, "Day Care and Selected Work Behaviors." *Academy of Management Journal*, 1976 (1) pp. 111-115.

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Cynthia Ransom, Pamela Aschbacher, and Sandra Burud (1988), *The return on an investment in child care benefits—is it real? The Union Bank Story*, unpublished manuscript: Pasadena, California, and *Productivity impact study conducted for Union Bank Child Care Center*, unpublished report: Pasadena, California.

D.L. Burge and D.L. Stewart (1988), *The Dominion Bank Story*, Virginia Tech University: Roanoke, Virginia.

Studies of Employer-Supported Child Care

Research Site	*Research/Cite*	*Sample*	*Research Design*
Federal OEO-Washington, D.C.	Krug, et al (1972)	50 parents from center 50 in control group	Pre-post test of users compared to control group
Control Data Consort. Minneapolis, MN	Milkovich & Gomez (1976)	30 center users 30 parent non-users 30 non-parent	Post-test of center users compared to 2 control groups
Multiple Companies–National with child care	Perry (1978)	58 employers, most with on-site centers	Survey of manager perceptions
State of New York Children's Place–Albany, NY	WRI (1980)	88 users of center 1 year after opening	Post survey of user (66% response)
Statewide Survey of Employers–Minnesota	AAUW (1982)	563 firms with and without child care	Survey of manager perceptions in 200 randomly selected companies and selected interviews
Multiple Companies–National with child care	Magid (1983)	204 employers with child care programs, mostly on-site	Survey of manager perceptions
Multiple Companies–National with child care	Burud, et al (1984)	178 employers, most with on-site centers	Survey of manager perceptions
Methodist Hospital	Burud (1984)	123 users of center	Post survey of user perceptions (71% response)
North Carolina, Textile Firm	Youngblood, et al (1984)	410 people in co. with center; 3 divisions of another co. with no center	Comparisons of employees in firm with center and those in firm without
Statewide Survey of Employers–NY	Governor's Comm. on Child Care (1986)	1041 firms with and without child care	Survey of manager perceptions in 10,558
Kid's Play, State of Wisconsin Pilot Day Care Center	State (1987)	56 users; 35 supervisors of center users	User perceptions survey before enrollment, 5 months after opening and 17 months after. Manager perceptions also surveyed
Ina S. Thompson Child Care Center State of Florida	Department of Administration (1987)	37-62 users; 42 supervisors of center users	User perceptions surveyed 9 months after opening and interviewed 1 year later. Interviews with managers
Multiple Companies–National	Dawson, et al (1988)	311 employees in 29 companies with various child care programs	Post-test of employees using company-sponsored child care programs
Catherine McAuley Health Center	Marquart (1988)	86 parents using hospital-based child care center or family day care program; matched to group of other child care users	Pre-post test of hospital center users compared with hospital-sponsored family day care centers and parents using other child care
Union Bank–Los Angeles, CA	Burud, et al (1988)	87 users 1 year before center opened and 1 year later	Pre-post test of users compared to control group, parents on waiting list and other bank employees
Dominion Bank Roanoke, Virginia	Burge & Stewart (1988)	400 randomly selected employees	Post-survey of all employees and users

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up to two years after. This comparison is critical for establishing causality, a consistent flaw in many analyses. Without a before and after test of groups, no evidence can be provided that the differences found between users and nonusers did not exist before the center opened.

Six of the studies are evaluations conducted for sponsoring employers. Five are based on employee perceptions of effects after using the center for at least five months.

Early Skeptics

A flurry of child care centers sponsored by employers opened in the early 1970s. The first experimental study was conducted in 1972 at the day care center sponsored by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in Washington, D.C. The evaluators concluded: "There is no evidence that OEO users of the CDC (Child Development Center) are absent or tardy less in 1972 than in 1971 before the CDC was in operation."

Milkovich and Gomez conducted the next experimental study at the 120-child center created by Control Data Corporation and 12 other Minneapolis employers. A random sample of 30 mothers with children in the center were compared to a matched sample of 30 mothers whose children were in other forms of care, and to a sample of 30 other employees (80 percent female) who were not parents or whose children were grown. Because very little is known about the kind of child care used by those not enrolled in the company-sponsored center, or why those parents did not use the center, it is difficult to ascertain if the reduced absenteeism and turnover rates found were caused by the company-sponsored child care center.

In 1980, a child care center was created in the factory of a North Carolina textile firm employing 95 people. The work performance of employees in this company was compared to another nonunion textile firm nearby. This firm had 1,000 employees and no child care center. The comparison group was described as needing improvement in morale, absenteeism, and turnover. These differences favored the company sponsoring the center, especially since comparisons were made with the entire employee population, and not specifically users of the center. As a result, the evaluators claimed that the center improved attitudes and work behavior, but admitted that "causality cannot be ascertained with certainty."

In a review of all these centers, the U.S. General Accounting Office observes: "None of these studies, nor any other research that came to our attention in this review, adequately established, in our opinion, a causal relationship between providing child care services and cited benefits to the employer."[78] *Personnel Psychology* concludes: "Despite enthusiasm by some chief executive officers, public relations officials, and child care advocates, assertions that employer-sponsored child care reduces workers' absenteeism or tardiness, or that it increases workers' productivity or job satisfaction, are not supported by credible research."[79]

Newer Research

More recent studies attempt to correct some of the flaws in earlier research. The Union Bank Child Care Center in Los Angeles, providing care to 60 employees' children age 6 weeks to 5 years, was evaluated 1 year before and 1 year after it opened in January 1987. The employees who used the center were compared with three groups; employees using other forms of child care, employees who were on the waiting list for the center, and other Union Bank employees in the area. The results, based on personnel records and employee reports, indicate that the child care center had a positive effect on turnover, absenteeism, maternity leave, and public relations. The relationship to tardiness, morale and recruitment was less clear.

The turnover rate for the bank as a whole was 18 percent. For parents not using the center, 9.5 percent of employees left the bank compared to 2.2 percent for center users. None of the center users quit to stay home with their children while 11 nonusers did.

The center is also credited with reducing the length of maternity leave. Users of the center were out 1.2 weeks less than mothers who used other forms of child care. However, once the infant program was filled, mothers did not have that advantage. It seems that the size of the infant program determines the overall impact on maternity leaves.

One year after the center opened, employees using the center were found to be absent 1.7 days less per year than other parents with children in child care. However, the absenteeism rate for center users did not drop from before enrollment in the center. The authors point out that at least the absence rate did not increase, as it did for nonusers. The authors of the study contend that children have the highest incidence of illness during the first year they are in group care. They concluded: "Absenteeism would be expected to drop during the second and subsequent years of the program's operation."

Half of the supervisors of employees using the center believed morale had improved among center users. The other half felt that morale was already high. Some supervisors reported improved morale among co-workers of center users, and 60 percent of them reported that their own morale was improved. One co-worker commented,

[78] U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Parental Leave: Estimated Costs of Human Resources, 925, The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1987*, Washington, D.C.: GAO/HRD 88-34, November, 1987, p. 13

[79] Thomas I. Miller, "The effects of employer-sponsored child care on employee absenteeism, turnover, productivity, recruitment or job satisfaction: What is claimed and what is known," *Personnel Psychology*, 37, pp. 277-289.

Union Bank Child Care Center
1987 Cost Savings*

Turnover	$63,000–$157,000[1]
Absenteeism	$35,000[2]
Public relations	$40,000[3]
Total Cost Savings	$138,000–$232,000[4]

* Does not include savings from reduced recruitment cost, improved morale, reduced tardiness and reduced tax expense.

[1] The 2.2 percent rate of turnover for center users compared to the 9.5 percent rate for those using other forms of child care translates into "at least 6.3 employees retained due to the availablility of the center." Based on 1980 figures from the Merchants and Manufacturers Association calculating the turnover costs for exempt office and technical workers in Southern California firms, Union Bank reduced turnover costs by $63,000 in the first year. If the 18 percent turnover rate for all Union Bank employees had been used, cost savings would equal $157,000.

[2] This cost was calculated as the average daily salary based on the weighted average monthly salaries and benefits by grade level, and assumes that only 20 percent of the absences require a replacement worker at the same cost.

[3] Dollar figures for the 27 newspaper and magazine articles, two TV and one radio spot, were calculated by an independent advertising firm based on a cost of equivalent advertising.

[4] In addition to the savings above, with a new state tax credit that went into effect the year after this study, the Union Bank is eligible to claim a $600 tax credit for each full-time child in the child care center, or a total of $36,000 in tax savings per year until 1992.

"I would have to do her job if she were tardy or absent, so it's been good for me."

Burud & Associates, who conducted the study for Union Bank, concluded that it was able to recover its annual subsidy of $105,000 (more than 40 percent of the center's operating budget). They estimated that within five years the Bank would fully recover its $430,000 in start-up costs (see box above).

In 1984, a study was made of the child care center at the Catherine McAuley Health Center (CMHC) in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The health center, the most successful Midwest institution in the Sisters of Mercy Health Corporation chain, instituted a variety of quality of work-life programs, including the day care center that opened in 1983 for 110 children at a cost of $1 million. The health center also offered a "cluster care program" that screens family day care providers and places them on a referral list made available to CMHC employees. This program was intended to offer greater flexibility to the employees working night shifts, rotating shifts or week-ends, and to those who would not get into the center or preferred a more home-like environment for their children.

The study compared the center users with the cluster care users. Center users were also compared with other parents of preschoolers and school-age children not using the CMHC programs. The groups were generally well-educated, well-paid, technical and professional employees in their thirties. Center users were the best educated of the groups, most likely to have an employed spouse, and had the highest family income. The evaluator did not believe these differences directly affected the variables being measured.

The study found that center users had a higher level of satisfaction with their child care arrangements, but they also had more work-related problems caused by their child care arrangement than did cluster program users or other nonusers. These problems did not occur frequently and were most often related to the need to stay late or leave early. Center users also experienced greater stress related to child care, and more problems when the child was sick. Nonuser parents relying on in-home care had significantly fewer work-related problems caused by their arrangement than family day care users.

Facility users said the child care program influenced their decision to accept and to continue employment at CMHC more than the other groups. Continuing employment was the major effect of the study. Turnover was measured in two ways: (1) the employee's intention to continue employment at the company, and (2) the employee's actual retention or departure from the company. Program users were significantly higher than the nonusers in their intention to continue employment because of the child care center, but there were no significant differences between groups in the actual turnover rates. The users were also more likely to recommend CMHC as an employer.

No significant differences were found in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or in the stress associated with balancing work and family life. There were differences, although not statistically different, in absenteeism and in turnover rates. Center users had the highest absenteeism in the year before the program began. They experienced a decrease in absenteeism each year of the program, while nonuser rates remained the same all three years. User absences decreased by about one day during the first year of the program and by an additional half-day the second year. Cluster program users did not show a decrease in absences during the first year, but in the second year, absences decreased by three days, possibly due to the slow start-up of the program. According to the findings: "Although these differences were not statistically significant, the reduced absenteeism rate represents considerable savings that may be of practical significance to the organization if cost analyses are taken into account."

A comparison of employers with and without on-site centers was conducted by Arthur Emlen of Portland State University for the 20 hospitals in the Sisters of Providence network. Of the two locations sponsoring on-site centers for employees—Providence Hospital in Anchorage (Alaska) and Providence Medical Center in Seattle—only the Anchorage hospital was in full operation. Employees in this hospital were compared to 12 other Sisters of Providence sites that did not have child care centers, but

Reasons for Not Evaluating Child Care Centers

Several managers whose companies sponsor on-site child care centers were interviewed about why evaluation research was not conducted at their firms. The findings revealed that some companies had evaluated their centers, but the results were not made public. For instance, Official Airline Guides conducts a review of its center every two years and submits a report to senior management. On most measures—ability to concentrate, job satisfaction, security, availability for overtime—these studies show that more than 90 percent of parents believe the center improves their performance. An executive in human resources at Official Airline Guides reports that one of the strongest perceived effects is on the company's ability to recruit, not just working mothers, but all categories of employees who want to work for a company with innovative benefits.

The director of the Laurance Armour Day School serving employees of Rush Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center said that the hospital "takes it on faith" that the center is improving employees' work performance and has not conducted an evaluation. She keeps her own statistics on employee retention. Every time the hospital acknowledges a group of employees who have reached a new milestone in their tenure at the hospital—5, 10, or 20 years—the director looks to see how many had children in the day care center at one point. In one instance, she found that 25 of the 60 people reaching a new plateau had used the center, a significant proportion since the center serves less than 1 percent of the hospital population.

This director also believes that evaluations would be methodologically difficult and time consuming for the center's staff, particularly considering the complexity of surveying employees from 45 departments. More concrete data would be useful, she says, only when there has been a bad year and pressure exists to trim budgets.

Other firms expressed different reasons for not evaluating their centers. At Johnson Wax, the firm's senior counsel explained that the center was not created to reduce turnover or absenteeism or to improve productivity. As an employee-oriented firm, the company felt it was the right thing to do for employees and their children. To the extent that evaluations take place, they focus on the quality of the center's program.

Management at Fel-Pro, Inc., also feels the company's center is an appropriate service to provide. They were concerned that an evaluation might make it appear that the company had a problem, or that the center had been developed for reasons other than employer awareness. Parent satisfaction with the center, assessed in a general way, has been found to be very high.

Fel-Pro is currently considering a study of its center. According to the center's director, a large enough sample is now available, with 200 parents having used the center over the past eight years. The company has also sponsored a summer camp and implemented an emergency child care program that may also be examined. Fel-Pro reports receiving numerous calls from other companies looking for evaluation data, providing additional incentive for a study.

At the U.S. Senate Employees Child Care Center, evaluations have not been conducted, according to the director, because "people were so glad to get the center, no one has worried about an evaluation." A distant relationship exists between this parent-governed center and the Senate that houses the service.

Based on the findings, it would seem that a company's willingness to conduct an evaluation of its child care program depends upon the rationale for the center, the perceived levels of satisfaction from parents, financial pressures, outside requests for data, and the complexity of the research that would be required.

which had 50 or more women employees with children under 18 years of age. Although the hospitals all belong to the same network, they operate in communities with different child care markets, unique cultural conditions, and distinct employee populations.

On-site programs are also subject to variations in quality and cost. These factors, in aggregate, affect the potential impact of any on-site center. Despite these limitations, the study finds that an on-site care facility makes child care easier. Mothers at the hospital with the child care center reported less stress than mothers at other hospitals. They were also less likely to have changed their child care arrangements in the last year, found it easier to locate child care, and deal with personnel policies as they relate to child care responsibilities.

On the minus side, the study uncovered no evidence that an on-site center reduces absenteeism. Absence rates in the Anchorage facility were the same or worse than at other sites. As the hospital staff indicated: "The mere presence of an on-site facility does not necessarily reduce interruptions, lateness, and other absenteeism, since there are still difficulties associated with getting children ready for the day, delivering them to the facility, and so forth."

A limited number of employers have conducted cost/benefit analyses, evaluations, or empirical studies on the effects of their child care centers (see box above). One deterrent to conducting evaluations is the complexity of the research methodology. While some of the studies are flawed, consistencies in the findings suggest that in order for the center to yield its potential to the company, the child care program must be tailored to employee needs and job demands, and flexible in accommodating a variety of schedules and children.

Mixed Views on Absenteeism

It is logical to assume that absenteeism in a workplace with a company-sponsored center would decrease due to the stability and quality of the program, and that

absences due to provider illnesses or program breakdowns would be eliminated. However, several studies report increased absenteeism among center users, a finding attributed largely to sick children.

The higher incidence of absence may be a function of the company-sponsored center's policy and provision for sick children. Employer concern about liability may lead companies to adopt strict sick policies that do not permit their centers to admit mildly ill children. The company has more to lose if the illness becomes an epidemic and many parents stay home with sick children. At a community center, parent absences due to an epidemic would be distributed among a number of employers. In addition, company policies may affect the degree to which absenteeism leads to a loss of productivity. If companies sanction paid absences to take care of sick children, for example, employees may respond to this flexibility and trust by making up lost time on their own. Thus, it is not clear whether the gains from the reduction in the number of child care breakdowns, provider illnesses, and reduced worry over quality are offset by the increased absences due to sick children.

Practical experience offered by several employers helps explain how absenteeism is affected by an on-site center. Susan Doctors, general manager of human resources at Official Airline Guides, observes that higher absenteeism among parents using the company's center might be explained by the company's strict sick policy. She also suggests that "parents may have lost their community network of neighbors and the option of having grandma come across town to pick up the child." Believing that parents belong at home with their sick children, the company provides three personal days that can be used to care for sick family members. On the other hand, the director of the child care center at Fel-Pro, an automative gasket maker in Skokie, Illinois, reports that the company's on-site center was comfortable with accepting a mildly ill child because the parents are nearby and can be called if the situation worsens. Parents are also on hand to administer medication, which center staffs are not permitted to do. Given their concerns about health, hospital centers might be expected to have very strict sick policies, so that absenteeism might increase. However, the director of a hospital-based center in Chicago, Illinois, contends that sicker children are more likely to be admitted because a full-time nurse is on site.

Absenteeism rates are also related to the age of the child. Older children are less likely to become ill, while younger children will be more susceptible to germs.

Managers' Perceptions

Eight studies questioning managers about the effects of child care programs include three national surveys of multiple companies providing child care support (generally in the form of a child care center). Two studies were conducted on statewide samples of employers that may or may not have had a child care program in place, and three measured the perceptions of managers who supervise center users. Some of the samples included managers who were able to observe the actual work performance of center users, while other managers had secondhand reports of the program's impact, and still others had formed opinions based on news reports and personal biases (see Table 14 on page 46).

Not surprisingly, the managers least likely to perceive any positive effects of a child care program were found in the New York State study, where the overwhelming majority of employers were not providing any child care support. In a 1986 survey for the Governor's Task Force on Child Care of 1,041 small-, medium- and large-sized firms, well under 50 percent of managers expected any beneficial impact from a child care program. Managers' perceptions, however, revealed uncertainty more than negative reactions. The expected benefits mentioned included improvement in employee morale and a reduction in absenteeism, turnover and employee stress.

Overall findings from the New York State study may be explained by the preponderance of small companies represented in the sample. However, it separates the views of managers in small-, medium- and large-sized firms. As Table 15 (page 46) indicates, the larger the company, the more likely the manager is to perceive a positive gain from having employer-sponsored child care. This finding is confirmed in the other statewide studies, where primarily large firms were surveyed.

Three national surveys of employers with some form of child care assistance were conducted in 1978, 1983 and 1984. They covered 440 firms, although some overlap may be present in the samples. A company-sponsored center was the most common form of child care assistance reported. Recruitment and absenteeism were the strongest perceived benefits of company child care initiatives. In evaluations of two of the three on-site centers where managers who supervised center users were surveyed, morale improvement was seen as the greatest benefit.

Across all eight studies, morale is seen as the most positive outcome of company-sponsored child care—it was ranked highest in four of the eight studies. Absenteeism was second. Managers in Minnesota and the Florida child care center gave it top ranking, while three others reported it as the second most important benefit.

Parent/Employee Perceptions

Six studies surveyed the users of the child care centers (see Table 16 on page 47). These include three state-sponsored centers, two hospital-sponsored centers, and one corporate center (Dominion Bankshares in Virginia). Generally, the percentage of users reporting a positive effect on any of the measures presented is higher than the percentages of managers evaluating

Table 14: Manager Perceptions of Benefits Gained from Employee-Sponsored Child Care Centers

	Managers of Center Users			*Managers in Multiple Companies with Child Care*			*Managers in Multiple Companies With or without Child Care*	
	Dominion Bank 1988	*WI 1987*	*Florida 1987*	*Perry 1978*	*Magid[1] 1983*	*Burud 1984*	*Minnesota 1982*	*New York 1986*
Improves: Productivity	**48%**	60%	38%			**49%**	72%	32%
Motivation		43			67	63		
Satisfaction		66			170	83		
Attitude towards work	40			55%				
Morale	**70***	**88***			345	**90***	**85**	**44***
Reduces absenteeism	45	71	**62***	**72**	**214**	53	**89***	**42**
Reduces tardiness	33	54	43		88	36	67	36
Reduces stress								41
Increases scheduling flexibility						50		
Reduces turnover		23		57	211	65	71	39
Improves attitude toward employer				65				
Increases loyalty/ commitment						73		35
Increase in women returning from leave		43			208	79		
Improves recruitment				**88***	**448***	**85**	73	35
Public image/publicity		77		60	137	80		
Availability of temporary help					26			
Quality of work force					205	42		
Equal employment opportunity					13	40		
Improves community relations				36	154	**85**		
Improves quality of products/services	30					48	37	
Reduces training costs								14

Boldfaced numbers indicate the highest and second-highest rankings in each study. An * indicates highest ranking.

[1] The Magid study findings are shown as rankings, not percentages, as they are in the other studies.

Table 15: Effects of Child Care Support on Employees' Work Behavior

Percent believing support has positive effect, by size of company.

	Size of Company			
	Up to 100 (N=285)	*101-500 (N=253)*	*501-1500 (N=220)*	*Over 1500 (N=204)*
Recruitment	29.1%	34.0%	44.6%	47.6%
Retention	33.0	34.8	49.5	52.9
Absenteeism	31.6	41.5	54.1	56.9
Tardiness	27.0	36.4	47.3	48.5
Stress	32.3	40.3	53.2	54.9
Morale	37.2	44.7	57.3	54.4
Loyalty	32.6	34.8	44.1	41.2
Training costs	12.6	13.5	17.3	18.1
Productivity	27.0	30.4	40.0	40.2

Source: New York State Commission on Child Care, *Employers and Child Care in New York State*, (1986), p. 26.

Table 16: Employees' Perceptions of Benefits Gained from Employer-Sponsored Child Care Centers

	Dominion Bank	*Methodist Hospital*	*Southeastern Hospital*	*State of Wisconsin*	*State of Florida*	*State of New York*
Improves productivity	67	61	51	73	60	47
Increases motivation				72		
Improves morale		79*				
Decreases absenteeism	84*	75	67	72		
Decreases tardiness	60	79*	60	46	60	
Reduces stress					57	83*
Improves scheduling flexibility	40	69		82*		
Able to work more overtime	63	62				
Able to work odd shifts		43	42			
Reduces turnover	70	41	72*	25	43	35
Improves attitude toward employer					84	
Increase in women returning from leave		33				45
Improves recruitment		51			81	
Improves public image					87*	
Would recommend employer	74					
Improves promotability		17				

Boldfaced numbers indicate the highest and second-highest rankings in each study; an * indicates highest ranking.

these effects, but less consistency is evident in parent responses across the studies. Two of the surveys report morale as the most likely benefit to result from use of the center. Employees also tend to believe that their absenteeism has declined, and their productivity improved, because of the child care center.

Actual Outcomes

In the six experimental studies conducted between 1972 and 1988—testing 12 different possible outcomes—the most positive benefit of an employer-sponsored child care center appears to be a reduction in turnover (see Table 17, page 48). Four studies found lower turnover rates among center users and a comparison group. (One study was a cost/benefit analysis with a comparison group that did not conduct statistical tests.)

Improved recruitment potential was the second ranked benefit in the studies. Statistically significant findings in two studies document that employee acceptance of employment at the firm was related to the child care center. Similar results showed that center users were more likely to recommend the employer because of the center.

Differences Between Perception and Reality

When comparing Tables 14, 16 and 17, which summarize the findings of all the studies reviewed, notable differences appear between outcomes perceived by employees and managers and those actually occurring as reported in the experimental studies.

The primary benefit of an employer-sponsored child care center as measured in experimental studies appears to be reduced turnover and improved recruitment, while managers and center users are more likely to indicate that morale is the greatest benefit. Managers across studies agree that absenteeism can be reduced and employees are more likely to report an improvement in productivity.

It is evident that the actual benefits of a child care center may be very different than those expected by managers and employees, and that realistic expectations for company child care programs need to be established (see box on page 49). Given labor shortages and growing competition, turnover and recruitment effects of a company-sponsored child care center may be the most important benefits for employers to derive.

Parental Leave

Since the number of working women who will become pregnant during their work careers is increasing, companies are assessing their leave policies for employees, and the impact they may have on decisions to return to work. In a 1981 survey of 1,000 companies by Columbia University, researchers concluded that less than 40 percent of working women are able to take a

Table 17: Findings from Experimental Studies

	Krug, et al 1972	*Milkovich, et al 1976*	*Youngblood, et al 1984*	*Dawson, et al 1984*	*Marquart 1988*	*Union Bank 1988*
Improves productivity/ performance		0		•		+
Increases job satisfaction			•		0	
Improves morale						+
Improves organizational climate			•			
Decreases absenteeism	–	•	0	0	+	+
Decreases tardiness	–					+
Reduces stress					0	
Able to work overtime				•		
Reduces turnover		•	•	•	•	+
Increases loyalty/ commitment			•		0	
Increase in women returning from leave						+
Improves recruitment	+			•	•	+
Would recommend employer				•	•	
Improves community/ public relations						+
Improves promotablility				0		

• Statistically significant differences found between center users and companion group(s).
+ Differences found between center users and others, but no statistical test proved it.
0 No differences found, or couldn't measure the outcome in question.
– The opposite effect occurred, i.e., absenteeism increased.

6-week leave with some income protection. The NCJW study found a comparable number of women forced to choose between their jobs and their babies.

Among women in the NCJW study who did not resume their jobs after maternity leave, 50 percent based their decision on job satisfaction. Health benefits and child care assistance also made a difference. Another 20 percent said that not being able to make "satisfactory child care arrangements" was a deciding factor. The NCJW report concludes: "While some attrition of new mothers from the labor force is entirely voluntary and inevitable, these findings suggest that substantial attrition may be caused by child care difficulties that could be reduced through employer assistance."

One factor related to the workplace impact of parental leave is the ability to replace the individuals who take leave. In a 1987 study,[50] the U.S. General Accounting Office found that fewer than one in three absent workers is actually replaced, that the cost of the temporary replacements is similar to or less than the cost of the employees who are replaced, and that employers in general do not perceive a significant loss of output. In a 1990 study conducted by the Families and Work Institute, employers in four of the states that mandate parental leave were most likely to assign work temporarily to other employees (92 percent used this method), pay overtime to existing employees (66 percent), or hire an outside temporary replacement (41 percent).

The NCJW study also found that workplace accommodations are gratefully reciprocated by pregnant employees (see Table 18, page 50). The accommodations considered important were: (1) job-protected leave; (2) some wage replacement; (3) health insurance coverage during leave; (4) sufficient paid time off for medical appointments and occasional sick days; (5) flexible scheduling that allows for adjustments in the work routine; (6) parenting leave following disability; (7) help with finding or paying for child care; and (8) a sensitive supervisor.

Among the workplaces studied, 2 percent of firms had none of these provisions and 2.5 percent had all eight. The average score for all workplaces was 60 (with "0" assigned to those with no accommodations and 100 to those with all). Workplaces with scores in the highest 20 percentile were considered "highly accommodating" of pregnancy, while workplaces in the

[50] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Child Care: Employer Assistance for Private Sector and Federal Employees*, GAO, Report No. 96D-86-38, Washington, D.C., 1986.

Steps for Evaluating Child Care Programs

In a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1989, Berkeley Planning Associates screened over 50 companies with child care benefits and conducted intensive case studies of seven firms to understand their interest in evaluating their efforts. The authors conclude that there is little likelihood of most firms being able to conduct very methodically rigorous evaluations of their own child care programs, even if they were motivated to do so. Although an academic standard of research may not be feasible, it is possible for firms to be better informed than they are now, and to enhance their planning and decision making about child care. The following steps were presented for employers considering some evaluation of their child care initiatives:

(1) *Undertake a careful planning process and needs assessment before implementing a new benefit.* Child care benefits should be designed to suit the needs and capacities specific to the organization.

(2) *When designing an evaluation, focus on important outcomes.* Begin by identifying the behavioral effects most important to the firm, and, among these, those most likely to be influenced by the type of child care program that is offered. Focus on a small number of possible effects.

(3) *Recognize the effect of other policies.* Be aware of the extent to which other policies and benefits of the firm may be affecting employee behavior. To some extent, the firm may be evaluating its work-family policies as a whole rather than the child care program in particular.

(4) *Think about data needs in advance.* This will enable the firm to design data-collection systems that will capture the most important information about employee characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes.

(5) *Collect qualitative as a well as quantitative data.* Both surveys and focus groups can provide valuable information.

(6) *Understand what the study can/cannot do.* Expectations about the kind of information to be produced should be realistic and employers should have an idea of how this information can be used. Be sure to take into account study limitations when interpreting results.

(7) *Look at cost-effectiveness.* Consider cost-effectiveness estimates (qualitative comparisons of returns given a fixed dollar amount to invest) as a more realistic alternative to benefit-cost evaluations, especially where study designs have significant limitations or benefits are very difficult to quantify. Another alternative is break-even analysis: Calculate program costs, determine the break-even point, and estimate from quantifiable evaluation findings how close the program is to breaking even.

For firms interested in conducting more rigorous and complex evaluations and who can rely on expert advice, the following additional considerations are warranted:

(1) *Plan prospective evaluations as needed.* When pre-program data are not available, plan a prospective longitudinal evaluation and expect to collect data long enough to show the effects of interest (e.g., a minimum of two years for turnover effects, one year for absenteeism).

(2) *Include behavioral comparisons.* If the goal is to understand something beyond user satisfaction and utilization, include some type of comparison in the study. This may be a comparison of participants' pre-program behavior to post-program behavior and/or a comparison of participants to nonparticipants.

(3) *Use external comparisons as needed.* If no pre-program data are available, and no comparison group can be constructed within the company, devise a comparison group within another (preferably similar) firm. Differences between both the employee groups and the firms should be taken into account.

(4) *Be aware of sample size problems.* Sample sizes of over 50 are desirable. If the user group is small, nothing can be done to increase the size of this sample. A small user group may be the reason to extend the period of evaluation. Having a very small internal comparison group is an argument for looking for an alternative group outside the firm.

Adapted with permission from Berkeley Planning Associates, *Employer-Supported Child Care: Measuring and Understanding its Impacts on the Workplace. Final Report.* Prepared for U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development, Washington, D.C.: 1989, pp. 203-206. See also *A Guide to Assessing the Benefits and Costs of Employer Child Care Assistance*, prepared by Berkeley Planning Associates, 440 Grand Avenue, Suite 500, Oakland, California 94610.

lowest 20 percentile had "low accommodation." In general, women in the highly accommodating companies were more satisfied with their jobs; took fewer sick days; were less likely to be ill on the job; worked more on their own hours; were more likely to work during their third trimester; and were less likely to quit.

The average number of absences from work due to illness among all women in the sample was only 2.6 days over 8 months of pregnancy. Absences in the highly accommodating companies averaged about 1.3 days less than those in the companies with low level accommodations. Among the women who had stopped working during their third trimester when interviewed, those from workplaces with high accommodations reported having worked about one-and one-half months longer than women from unsupportive companies. The study concludes that "accommodating employers benefit from having experienced workers stay on the job longer."

The NCJW study also found a relationship between job satisfaction among pregnant workers and the degree to which pregnancy is accommodated in their workplaces. Only 41 percent of women working for low

Table 18: Employees' Response to Company Accomodations for Pregnancy

Level of Job Satisfaction (N=2257)	*Degree of Accommodation*		
	Low	*Mid*	*High*
Not satisfied at all	8%	3%	1%
Somewhat satisfied	51	36	26
Very satisfied	41	61	73

Behavior	*Degree of Accommodation*		
	Low	*Mid*	*High*
Average number of days missed due to illness in pregnancy (N=2216)	3.4	2.5	2.1
How often ill on the job? (N=2218)			
Hardly ever	29%	41%	51%
Not often	22	22	21
Often	22	18	16
Very often	27	19	12
Spend unpaid time on work? (N=2255)			
No	75%	[illegible]%	63%
Yes	25	34	37
Still working in third trimester? (N=2257)			
No	45%	26%	21%
Yes	55	74	79

J.T. Bond, *Accommodating Pregnancy in the Workplace* (New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1987).

Paternity Leaves

Fathers are less likely to be offered parental leave and when they are, it is usually only a few days or weeks.* There is no indication that fathers leave their jobs to care for newborns. A 1983 study by Catalyst found that 37 percent of responding companies offered unpaid leaves to fathers. In the 1988 survey by The Conference Board, 44 percent of companies made leaves available to fathers, 92 percent of them unpaid. Eighteen days is the maximum amount of leave time offered fathers according to The Conference Board survey.

Only nine of the 384 companies participating in the Catalyst study reported that a father had actually taken such unpaid leave. In two studies, one of 36 mothers and another of 40 fathers, fathers were reported to have taken 5.6 and 6.6 working days off, respectively. In Sweden, in 1981, 85 percent of fathers took an average of 7.5 days off from work following childbirth. Anecdotal reports indicate that a growing number of men in the United States are requesting leave.

In Pleck's review of the literature, he concludes that while a few fathers take advantage of long-term leave policies, they do take short-term leave through the "manipulation" of vacation and sick leave and other formal leave. No research is available on the work behaviors of men who take time off for their babies compared with those who do not.

* Graham L. Staines and Joseph H. Pleck, *The Impact of Work Schedules on the Family*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1983.

accommodating firms indicated that they are very satisfied with their jobs, compared to 73 percent of women in companies that are very supportive.

A U.S. Chamber of Commerce survey reported that half of the responding employers said they had formal parental leave plans. Of these companies, 61 percent said their leave plan improves their ability to recruit and retain workers. (See box above for an update on paternity leave.)

What is not known about pregnancy and parental leave is whether there are differences between first-time and repeat experiences. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women are more likely to leave their jobs after having a second child. The balancing act becomes more precarious, so that greater flexibility is required by company, manager and employee.

Flextime

Work hours have changed little since World War II. Any changes in the workweek prior to the 1950s were designed to protect the health of workers, increase leisure in order to stimulate consumer demand, and ultimately to increase the standard of living. Time off was also thought to increase productivity by reducing fatigue that can lead to reduced output, lower quality work, increased sickness costs and unnecessary absences.

The new demographics of the work force are creating pressure for alternative work schedules. Baby boomers generally feel entitled to make more decisions about their work. They also express more interest in leisure time. The shift to a service economy, where customer contact is vital, also plays a role in the emergence of alternative work schedules that can accommodate longer work days. While these pressures call for a change in the scheduling of hours and where they are worked, they do not necessarily mean a reduction in the workweek.

Flextime can help employees with family responsibilities by: (1) allowing an employee to arrange more time with the family; and (2) reducing work-family conflict by eliminating or reducing scheduling problems.

Prevalence of Programs

In 1978, an estimated 2.5 to 3.5 million workers (excluding professionals, salespeople, and the self-employed who typically control their own hours), were on flextime schedules. By 1985, Department of Labor data show that 9.1 million full-time wage and salary workers, or 12.3 percent, had flexible work schedules.

Data further indicate that men are more likely to benefit from flextime than women.[81] Although more flextime programs are in the private sector, 20 percent of Federal government employees have flexible work schedules and 42 states offer flextime to their employees. The number of employees on flextime in Canada and Western Europe is significantly higher than in the United States.

Based on a 1989 Conference Board survey, half of the 521 large companies responding offered flextime. About a third of these firms had expanded their use of flextime in the recent past. About half planned to increase flextime availability in the near future.

A 1985 survey of medium-sized firms conducted for the American Management Association by Goodmeasure, found 35 percent of firms offering flextime to their employees. Half of these firms had adopted flextime between 1980 and the survey date.

A slightly lower percent is reported in a 1988 study by the American Management Society (AMS) (290 companies responding). Thirty-one percent of employers reported having flextime in the AMS study, double its 1977 figure of 15 percent.

Companies with many years experience using flextime have helped stimulate growth of these programs because of the positive responses from employees and managers. A 1978 review of 14 flextime studies, with an occasional exception, showed that the introduction of flexible work schedules produced a generally positive shift in employee attitudes and did not result in abuses.[82] (See box on page 52.)

Individual company studies, such as the one examining the first experiment in flextime at a German aerospace firm in 1967, found that flextime led to a 40-percent reduction in absenteeism, the disappearance of tardiness, and a dramatic improvement in employee morale. Another company, Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm (MBB) surveyed flextime users in 1969 and found that two-thirds of the employees reported better working conditions, a third noted a better balance between work and private life, and a fourth said they had an easier commute (see Table 19).

Among 43 studies of flextime reviewed in 1980, only 8 inquired into the effects of family relationships, largely, perhaps, because most companies did not implement flextime programs to accommodate family needs.[83] Companies were more likely to be concerned with tardiness, commuting, or morale. Furthermore, other outcomes related to flextime are more easily measured, such as the number of insurance claims, stress-related illnesses or accidents, or tardiness.

[81] Earl Millor, "How Prevalent are Shift Work and Flextime?," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 19, 1986.

[82] Stanley D. Nollen and Virginia H. Martin, *Alternative Work Schedules, Part I: Flextime*, New York: AMACOM, a division of American Management Associations, 1978.

[83] R.A. Winnett and M.S. Neale, "Results of an experimental study on flextime and family life," *Monthly Labor Review*, November, 1985, pp. 29-32.

Table 19: Reports of Effects of Flextime

	MBB (1969) N unknown employees	*GAO (1985) 2,000 employees*	*AMA (1978) 196 companies*	*AMS (1988) 290 companies*
Better working conditions	65%			
Better balance with private life	31	72%		
Easier travel	31		77	
Better fit work rhythm	21			
More freedom	12			
Better fit of work to performance	6			
Improved morale		74	97	40
Improved productivity			48	
Reduced turnover			53	17
Reduced absenteeism			73	17
Reduced tardiness			84	82

As Ronen reports, flexible hours can satisfy both intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Extrinsic needs are met because flextime improves basic work conditions by allowing adjustments in commuting times, reducing anxiety about tardiness, and shifting management's focus away from monitoring attendance. The intrinsic benefits accrue because flexible work schedules increase employee responsibility, independence and growth potential, thus motivating the employee. One study concludes that "under conditions when flexible work schedules reinforce specific employee needs, a contribution to satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment and work attendance can be expected."

The recent Conference Board study found that only 2 percent of firms collect data on the costs of their flextime programs.[84] While 84 percent of firms that offer flextime are satisfied with the job performance of employees, only half (51 percent) are satisfied with the ease of supervising them. This discrepancy between the effects of flextime on employee work performance and ease of supervision was found with all alternative work schedules. Flextime was typically mentioned as the arrangement found most advantageous in reducing absenteeism and turnover.

[84] Kathleen Christensen, *Flexible Scheduling and Staffing*, The Conference Board, Research Bulletin 240, 1989.

Perceptions of Users and Non-Users of Flextime

Good and bad effects of flextime among 196 users.[a]

Good effects [b]	*Bad effects* [c]	*Sometimes good, sometimes bad* [d]
Raises employee morale	Management job made more difficult	Coverage of work situations
Reduces tardiness	Internal communication worsened	Employee scheduling
Eases employee commuting		
Reduces absenteeism		
Makes recruiting easier		
Reduces turnover		
Increases productivity		

[a] In order from strongest to weakest.
[b] Half or more of all users reported better results due to flextime, with few or no worse results expected.
[c] Up to half of all users reported worse results here, with few or no better results reported.
[d] Responses about equally divided here, no change, or worse results caused by flextime.

Expected good and bad effects of flextime among 374 non-users.[a]

Good effects [b]	*Bad effects* [c]	*Sometimes good, sometimes bad* [d]
Raises employee morale	Management job harder	Productivity
Makes recruiting easier	Employee scheduling harder	
Reduces absenteeism	Work scheduling harder	
Reduces tardiness	Coverage worse	
Reduces turnover	Internal communication worse	
Eases employee commuting	Utilities costs higher	
	Personnel administration harder	
	External communications worse	
	Support services cost more	
	Relationships with customers worse	

[a] In order from strongest to weakest.
[b] Half or more of all non-users expected better results due to flextime, with few or no worse results expected.
[c] Half or more of all non-users expected worse results due to flextime, with few or no better results expected.
[d] Responses about equally divided among better, no change, or worse results expected under flextime.

Source: S.D. Nollen and V.H. Martin, *Alternative Work Schedules: Flextime*, an AMA survey report, New York, AMACOM, 1978, pp. 21, 29.

More Time is Really More Convenient Time

While flextime does not reduce the total number of hours worked, more conveniently arranged hours may permit more time spent on activities outside work. In a study of 79 clerical workers, regular users of flextime showed a significant change in nonwork activity, while those who were not on flextime did not.[85] A 1978 evaluation of flextime at John Hancock Insurance Company found that workers increased their family time while on flextime. In another study, groups with more discretionary time displayed the strongest attachment to their jobs. This was confirmed in another study where 90 percent of those on flextime indicated that this work arrangement had increased their interest in remaining with the organization.

A dramatic reduction in both absenteeism and tardiness was experienced by 92 organizations participating in a national survey. Turnover was less affected, with 61 percent reporting no change, and 39 percent reporting a reduction in turnover after a year. After 3 years of flextime, however, turnover reductions were reported by 64 percent of the firms, while 36 percent reported no change.

A 1985 study of 2,000 Federal employees by the U.S. General Accounting Office compared employees on flextime and those on standard schedules.[86] Eighty-nine percent of the employees with dependent care responsibilities were found to be satisfied with their work schedules, compared with 62 percent of those on fixed schedules. Three-fourths of the flextime users reported that the program had a positive effect on morale, and 72 percent used alternative work schedules to let them take care of family obligations, doctor's appointments, meetings and school carpools.

[85] Jon L. Pierce, John W. Newstrom, Randall B. Dunham, Alison E. Barber, *Alternative Work Schedules*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1989, p. 34.

[86] Halcy Bohen and A. Viveros-Long, *Balancing Jobs and Family Life*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1981.

In 1981, a study of 325,000 employees by the Office of Personal Management revealed that flextime users spent more time with family, more time on household chores, and more time in children's school activities. The freedom to set work schedules enabled employees to spend less money for babysitting services. The data strongly suggest that alternative work schedules may enhance the quality of family relationships and child care.

Another study of federal employees, comparing flextime users with a control group, found that employees on flextime generally came to work earlier and gained increased family time in the evening. Bohen, who analyzed flextime at two federal agencies in 1981, found no significant differences in the time allocated to child care between those on flextime and those on standard hours, although flextime users increased the amount of time spent on housework. Researchers concluded that "flextime may increase the amount of time that wives spend in family roles and thereby render even more inequitable the traditional division of labor."

The Bohen study showed a slight discrepancy in the perceptions of shared household labor. While 50 to 60 percent of men said they shared responsibilities equally with their spouses, less than 40 percent of women agreed. About 40 percent of women wanted their husbands to do more housework, while 15 percent of men thought their wives should do more. Sixty-five percent of women wanted their husbands to assume more child care responsibilities.

Less Work-Family Conflict

The Bohen study reveals that flextime helps reduce work-family stress for single adults with no children, married women with no children, and married fathers in traditional families—but not mothers. According to the report: "The magnitude of the logistical, energy and time demands on families with two employed parents or a single parent cannot be dramatically altered by minor changes in daily work schedules." The flextime schedule under evaluation at this federal agency allowed variations of one-half hour at either end of the day. Such limitations on flextime seem to have little effect on diminishing work-family stress.

Staines and Pleck report in their analysis of the 1977 Quality of Employment survey that one-third of all workers believe their jobs and families interfere with one another. While gender does not make a difference in the overall level of work-family conflict, men tend to complain about excessive work hours while women are strained by scheduling conflicts. The authors also found that scheduling control means more than when to start and stop work; it can moderate the relationship between stressful work schedules and family life.

The analysis of alternative work schedules helps explain why the family is subordinated to work when work-family conflicts arise: Since people have less control over their work schedules than their family lives, families tend to make all the adjustments.

The overall work-family effects of flextime may be modest compared to other program initiatives. Research suggests that flextime plays a modest role in solving work-family conflict. Far more significant are the returns to the company through the elimination of tardiness, improvements in attitudes, reduction of absenteeism, and increased recruiting advantages. Since implementation costs are so low, little is needed to show a return on investment for flextime. Of the 196 companies in the AMA study, 80 percent report no change in personnel administrative costs, training costs, or support services (security or cafeteria) due to the adoption of flextime.

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee assistance programs (EAPs), designed to handle substance abuse and other employee problems affecting job performance, have been in existence for more than 20 years. Only a handful of EAPs (out of an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 company programs) have conducted cost-benefit analyses that have been publicized. Among the results of EAPs:

- The U.S. Postal Service claimed annual savings of $2 million;
- New York Telephone claimed annual savings of $1.5 million;
- Du Pont's EAP showed a net profit of $500,000 for one year;
- Burlington Northern Railroad claimed a $14 return on every $1 invested;
- A major airline reported a $16.35 return on every dollar; and
- United Technologies EAP director claimed a 3:1 return on investment based on increased productivity, lower insurance costs, reduced absenteeism—all in the first year.

Hewitt Associates estimates that the average per-employee cost of an EAP is between $18 and $36.[87] (The cost is divided by the entire employee population, not just users.) But the cost of employees' bad habits and problems that go unchecked appears to be significantly higher.

In 1980, Illinois Bell studied 752 problem drinkers before and after they had been referred to the EAP. The employees' job performance ratings before entering the program were "fair to poor" 90 percent of the time. After counseling and/or treatment, the ratings rose to 66 percent "good." The company concluded that the EAP helped to achieve a 52 percent decrease in disability claims, a 42 percent decline in off-duty accidents, and a 61 percent drop in accidents on the job. Without the EAP, one

[87] *Employee Assistance Program Benefits, Problems, and Prospects*, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs, March, 1987.

employer found that an employee with alcohol problems is:

- three times more likely to be absent eight days or more;
- three times more likely to receive sickness benefits;
- four times more likely to have accidents; and
- five times more likely to file compensation claims.

Several literature reviews question whether anyone can identify and measure all program costs and whether benefits of EAPs can be identified and measured—and some question whether such measures are possible at all.

Sheila H. Akabas from Columbia University's Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace, who addressed the Arden House group, commented:

"In many ways, counseling is preventive intervention, especially if you get people early in the process. We have not figured out how to measure what does not happen. So in fact, if you solve that day care problem quickly or you take care of elder care, there is nothing to measure. Counseling programs also require psychological intervention. We have no way of measuring the effectiveness of psychotherapy...[therefore] we do not know how to measure the outcomes of employee counseling programs."

Some companies believe that employee reactions to the program provide adequate justification for its success. The Equitable's Charlotte, North Carolina office surveyed its employees after implementing an EAP and found that half of them reported feeling healthier, having a more positive outlook on life, and feeling a part of the company community.

After implementing an EAP, particularly one that develops a positive reputation, the number of people seeking its services and the number of referrals (by managers) to the program are likely to increase. Such growth may not be indicative of an increased incidence of problems. It may mean that people feel more comfortable seeking help for those problems, that referrals have become more acceptable, or that problems are more apparent.

Most of the research on EAPs focuses almost exclusively on substance abuse. Akabas comments:

"The movement to make EAPs into so-called 'broad brush programs,'—programs that are not alcoholism-focused, but more a 'help-without-hassle' effort—has attracted everybody to the programs: employees with family problems (spouses, children and other relatives), and other concerns including health care, legal problems, and financial problems. In fact, one of the great debates in the EAP movement has been how much of the problem is alcoholism and substance abuse and how much of it is another kind of problem. There are indications that problem clarification very much depends on who is delivering the service."

One study found that 28 percent of the problems presented to the EAP were family-related. But alcoholism can either precipitate family problems or be caused by them. In essence, EAPs try to prevent behavioral and emotional problems from becoming physical ailments. The problems addressed in the evolving, broad-brush EAP cannot be quantified simply by measuring changes in absence or accident rates.

Akabas noted that one of the most important benefits of EAP-generated data is that it is not derived "from outside research, but is specific to the conditions in the particular company where the EAP exists. It is one thing to note that The Travelers' study found lots of people who were dealing with older adults and conclude that the company should have an older adults program. It is quite another thing to say, 'our EAP program sees 20 percent of the people who are coming in with elder care problems and we, in this company, need a program to deal with that.' A good management information system in an EAP program can document the need and can begin to change that workplace in order to respond."

The ability of an EAP to achieve these goals depends on the support for the program. A Hazelden Foundation report concluded that the emphasis on health care cost containment will put employee assistance programs "under increased pressures to contain costs and deliver better cost-effective services."[88] Some EAP experts caution that broad-brush EAPs may not be effective if proper resources are not devoted to their expansion.

EAP cost effectiveness is not a return on investment that shows up on the annual financial report, since the costs and returns are preventive and not easily quantifiable. However, continued efforts are being made to document the benefits of EAPs in order to protect their future and improve their services.

[88] Ibid, p. 25.

Perspectives on the Research Process

A great deal can be learned from the experiences of companies and researchers who have been involved in worksite research on the family. To understand more about the research process—its purposes, resistances, costs, methodology, and usefulness—a panel of corporate managers was assembled at the Arden House Symposium to exchange research experiences. (Panel members are identified in the Method Box on page 6.) Their companies participated in research designed to define the problem—before most of their family-supportive policies or programs were implemented. Subsequent interviews were conducted with several companies that had evaluated various work-family programs and policies, and those who had not (see box, page 44). In addition, interviews were conducted with several researchers to get their perspectives on the research process.

The Rationale for Conducting Research

After conducting studies at three companies, researchers Googins and Burden from Boston University's School of Social Work prepared a paper outlining their reactions to the research process.[89] They focused primarily on the barriers to conducting work-family research and made some recommendations for overcoming those barriers. Their experiences confirm many of the issues raised by the corporate executives who managed the research process internally.

While the most frequently expressed purpose of conducting research among the companies interviewed was to learn more about the demographics of workers, the sources of data varied. At Digital Equipment Corporation, using external data was unacceptable to management because it would not construct a company profile. In the past, when employee populations were homogeneous, conducting a survey to create an employee profile was not necessary. Companies want to know how the work force has changed, how it may change in the future, and what problems result from these changes. Merck & Co., for example, recognized that they needed to learn more about dual-career couples and single parents in order to understand the size of the problem and whether it warranted a company response. IBM found relocation offers among dual-career couples turned down because of finances and a partner's career. The company wanted to find out whether a trend was developing that would lead to problems in staffing executive positions in the future.

Companies are also interested in comparisons among divisions of their firms, with their competitors in other companies, and with the U.S. population as a whole. At Du Pont, problems were arising at some company sites. The company's second survey was designed to measure the problems and articulate them quantitatively because, as Faith Wohl put it, "Quantitative arguments work at Du Pont—it is a research company."

Resistances to Worksite Research

Company resistance to research may be based on a concern about employee reactions to issues of privacy, the sensitive nature of the questions that are posed, and the expectation that the company should do more. A decision to proceed is made only when it is clear that the company is prepared to respond to the findings.

According to the researchers, since most companies believe that work and family are separate spheres of activity, the concept of work-family interaction does not exist. Thus, research on these issues is not considered a legitimate pursuit. Early studies of job performance and satisfaction, usually of men, focused on job-related variables. Early research on women focused on how female employment affected marriage and children, with the

[89] Dianne Burden, Bradley Googins, Ceil Downey, and Ray Levesque, *The Politics of Evaluation Research: Gaining and Maintaining Access to the Work Setting for Social Research*, Boston, Mass. Boston University School of Social Work, 1986.

Surprise Findings

Several companies were surprised that gender issues surfaced in the way they did—or turned out to be less important than originally assumed.

At Du Pont, the finding that work-family issues are not just women's issues got management's attention. With the proportion of female employees approaching 24 percent, the most persuasive finding was the 70 percent of all employees with children under 13 who said they use some form of child care outside the home. It was evident that child care was a mainstream employment issue.

At Digital, officials were surprised that women with young children, regardless of marital status, have similar problems in balancing child care and home responsibilities. This illustrates that many men still do not participate equally in raising the children and doing home chores. Significant differences still exist between men and women on the extent of childrearing roles.

At IBM, male employees did not realize the extent of the diversity. For example, when comparing the household structures of male and female employees of different ages, women were found to represent far more varied types of households, including many singles with dependents, whereas men typically lived in traditional family settings. They were also surprised by the large number of men who said they would be likely to take a leave of absence following childbirth or adoption.

Surprises also occurred elsewhere. One Digital operation learned that of the 45 percent of women who were planning to have children in the future, 72 percent were planning to have them over the next four years, and many of them did not want to return to full-time jobs. With low unemployment rates at the time of the survey, managers at the surveyed location began taking a look at job redesigns and part-time work opportunities.

assumption that work would have a negative impact (see box above).

The company may also be concerned about uncovering negative findings, or findings that will strengthen the union position during contract negotiations. In one company studied by Burden and Googins, questions about employees' child care arrangements and problems were rejected by the labor relations department because the data could be used by unions to strengthen their bargaining position on child care during contract negotiations. Negative findings that reflect poorly on the company or management might be risky for managers to present. The researchers found that managers who perceive their security as tenuous are not risk-takers.

Another company issue centers on the legal consequences related to control over the company name in published findings. Several of the companies studied were willing to relinquish ownership rights to raw data as long as they retained absolute control over the way they were identified in publications or publicity.

Although some companies are predisposed to research as a tool for decision making, they may have a negative view of social research. For example, one company's unique management style is one that researchers like to study. But senior executives have been unhappy with case studies, developed for graduate programs, that have revealed company secrets and strategies.

IBM, another company with a long tradition of conducting research, found resistance in the wording of specific questions. "Do we really want to ask our employees if they are going to have or adopt more children in the next five years? How are we going to word the question that will allow us to ask about 'significant others' and partners?"

Company work environments, too, may not be ideal laboratories for research. Researchers can be shuttled from one manager to the next, and key players often change because of transfers or restructuring.

Some recommendations by the researchers for overcoming barriers to conducting work-family research at the worksite include:

- Build a relationship with managers inside the company.
- Gather information about current internal issues at the company.
- Link the project to vested interests, especially those of the inside advocates, in order to stimulate the commitment.
- Obtain management support. This will insure later acceptance since more managers will have been involved with the process.
- Pilot test the survey instrument and have groups of employees review it to weed out inappropriate or overly sensitive questions.

Response Rates

While company response rates vary widely, almost all covered in this analysis were above 50 percent. The response rate is affected by several factors, including the perception of company support for the issue being surveyed; the method of distributing the survey instrument; cover letters (how they convey the company's purpose and whether they include an endorsement from top management); the ease of completing the survey instrument; and, the degree of anonymity afforded.

The NCNB response rate was 72 percent. The cover letter was signed by the president, undoubtedly a factor in gaining participation. Branch managers followed up with their own letters. Employees were asked to complete the survey at work because of the high number of

hourly employees who would need to be compensated if they completed the questionnaire on their own time. Similarly, at Digital, with a survey that took at least 45 minutes to complete (a disincentive for employees to participate), one unit allowed employees to go into the cafeteria on company time to work on it.

The potential for feedback may affect the response rate, too. IBM's periodic opinion surveys, which are completed in group settings, provide feedback at a departmental level. These surveys typically have a 90 percent participation rate. The survey on work/life issues was mailed to the employee's work station, and employees learned there would be no feedback. This may explain the lower response rate of 78 percent. This response, however, is the *highest* recorded among IBM surveys other than the opinion survey.

Does Research Guide Work-Family Responses?

Companies learn what support employees need from their surveys. The findings can be used to convince skeptics in the organization of the need for change and help direct the appropriate courses of action.

At Du Pont, one of the most urgent needs that surfaced was more information about child care services. The finding prompted a series of recommendations, one of which was to set up a resource and referral service in 1985 for employees and community residents. The service has since expanded from the corporate headquarters program to a statewide information and referral service.

NCNB began a new maternity leave policy based on their survey results showing that many women wanted more flexibility in their return to work. The four-month maternity leave was changed to a six-month leave with various phase-in options, and included full-time benefit coverage.

And at Digital, the survey provided additional impetus for programs and initiatives already in their development stage.

Dissemination of Findings

Managers and researchers report that feedback is essential and should be provided throughout the company. Attention should be paid to the implications of the findings and what they mean for new company initiatives. Some guidelines offered:

- Conduct meetings and briefings with personnel management teams.
- Advise managers and employees separately, and provide each group with project updates to arouse curiosity and gain support.
- Attend formal management meetings in order to gain visibility for the research and present project updates; seek other ways to be regularly available to the company.
- Publicize project updates in in-house publications.
- Post notices throughout the worksite that outline the steps of the project.
- Hold informal discussions with employees as the project progresses.
- Monitor the project to prevent misinformation and rumors, and to alleviate fears about the project.

Directions for Future Research on Work-Family Issues

At present, consistent research findings are available to identify the nature of the problem and the individuals most likely to be affected. Sufficient evidence also exists to convince receptive employers that work-family programs can positively affect the bottom line. While no amount of research will convince some employers, others may need more specific information in order to take action.

As noted earlier, gaps in research exist because of the sensitivity of the issues, corporate naivete about social science research, and the cost of conducting such research. A more significant factor inhibiting work-family research may be related to the stage of employer involvement in work-family issues: Many companies are still debating whether or not to get involved, and are not at the point of focusing on specific responses. Therefore, research to date has more frequently been used to persuade than to implement.

The new generation of research calls for greater sophistication in process and purpose—inquiries that are interdisciplinary, longitudinal, comparative and visionary. Outlined below are some ideas for research that meet these standards and can further the knowledge about work-family problems and programs.

Interdisciplinary Research

The issues being addressed—an interaction between the organization, the individual and the family—call for experts working together within each realm to enhance the quality of findings, improve their usefulness in designing a corporate response, and avoid clashes between researchers who want to know about the well-being of the family and the managers who want to know about the well-being of the organization. Some areas for study include:

Revisit theories of work motivation and satisfaction by including a family focus. The question is whether family supportive policies motivate employees to become more productive or merely prevent them from being less productive. New values, worker expectations and lifestyles, as well as demands for workers, present challenges to classic management theory.

Publish available research on work-family problems. Generally, company needs assessments are not publicly available or, at best, not widely available. Research buried in academic journals is not readily accessible to the business community. More "bilingualism" is needed in the presentation of research findings.

Improve the practical application of work-family responses by involving organizational development experts and strategic planners. If schools of business administration were to consider work-family issues in their curricula, managers would not only be better prepared when they entered organizations, but new case studies and analyses, perhaps textbooks, would further understanding of the work-family nexus.

Holistic Research

Presumably a more interdisciplinary research team would produce more holistic, or all encompassing analyses. Some methods for establishing more comprehensive research are:

Study programs that have failed and examine problems that arise in the implementation process. Current research presents only the good news.

Examine how work-family problems and programs affect co-workers and others indirectly involved. Like secondary smoke, do work-family conflicts experienced by one employee poison the atmosphere for others? Are co-workers more productive when colleagues have their work-family problems solved? Are employees without children resentful of accommodations to child care needs and thus perform poorly?

Study the effect of the corporate culture on work-family conflicts. Such investigations would provide

useful information regarding aspects of the culture that might need to change. The deeply rooted values and attitudes of people working for the organization condition a company's response—or lack of response. For instance, an on-site center may not be beneficial if employees are still expected to function in an unsupportive environment.

Comparative Research

Research can be undertaken to compare various company options in order to determine their relative effectiveness in solving certain problems. Companies may be able to learn who is likely to benefit from a given response, in what ways, and with what financial cost and payback. Some ideas for consideration:

Compare the same option in several companies. In this way, the impact of culture can be better understood and insights gained into the effectiveness of implementation strategies, such as methods of communication and employee involvement.

Conduct studies that provide more comparisons between men and women of comparable age, job, and family status. Virtually nothing is known about how men and women respond to different corporate programs.

Examine work-family issues in unsupportive environments at work and in the home. By definition, only progressive companies are studied either because they have been the only ones willing to let researchers conduct the investigations (they presumably have nothing to hide), or because they are among the minority of firms that have family supportive policies that can be evaluated.

Look more closely at lower-income families and the kinds of work-family conflicts they face, as well as their reactions to various company supports. This population is important to study because a large number of welfare women with children over three years of age are now required to work. The kinds of jobs they take and the forms of support they need are likely to be very different than those discussed in the current body of research.

Compare the effects of various programs on high performers versus low performers. The research on child care centers had difficulty measuring productivity because most managers rated employee performance very high. What are the effects of various company programs and policies on low-performing employees? Without some of this research, companies may pursue work-family initiatives in the same atmosphere of meritocracy that exists today: Only those who are deserving should be accommodated. The view is that ad hoc policies on flextime, work-at-home options, or even parental leave should only be given to high performers. What might be overlooked is that the low-performing employee may be less productive because family needs are unmet.

Learn more about the different options themselves. Research should go beyond the simple assertion that child care is good for business or that flextime eases work-family strain. The question is, how much flexibility or what type of child care center? Do differences in administrative structures matter? For example, do the Procter & Gamble centers run by the Salvation Army yield the same return on investment as the center owned and operated by Hoffman-La Roche as a department of the company? Are there differences between on- and off-site centers, especially since they affect the overall culture of the organization and the benefits that might accrue to nonusers? What about enrollment policy? The curriculum? The length of time the center has been open?

In the area of flextime, some evidence suggests that the amount of time the program is in place matters, and that the degree of flexibility will influence the outcomes. It is not very useful to say that "flextime works" without specifying the length of the core hours and the frequency with which arrangements can be changed.

Examine groups of employees in various family and job situations. Little research has been done on the effects of divorce and subsequent single parenting, or on the impact of a company garnishing wages for child support payments. Very little data exist on problems of workers with handicapped dependents, children with drug problems, and elders in long-term care. More attention can be directed at the special needs and interactions of immigrant populations. Few studies exist on the effects of company relocations where the employee is adjusting to both a new city and a new work environment after uprooting the family. And research is particularly lacking on the work-family issues that emerge before, during and after downsizing, mergers and acquisitions.

Longitudinal Research

Research is needed that analyzes different levels of commitment to work and family roles, and the ways in which interventions work over time.

Study women employees over a period of years before and after childbirth. It is surmised by some that whatever setbacks in work occur as the result of childbearing or childrearing are temporary. While a woman may "drop out" of the workforce, it is assumed that she will return. What conditions ease the impact of parenting? Which ones exacerbate the problem?

Interactive Research

Conduct research that can integrate the effects of various company responses occurring simultaneously. Most companies pursuing family-supportive policies realize that no one solution can solve all problems faced by all employees. Since these firms tend to

package several programs to address multiple needs, studying any one particular response is often difficult. For instance, how can one assert that a child care center improves productivity if flextime is introduced at the same time as the center opened?

Examine the coping strategies and vulnerabilities of employees with multiple family responsibilities. Just as companies implement multiple solutions, employees often face multiple problems. A significant number of employees have responsibilities for both old and young dependents. What is the cumulative impact of these family responsibilities, and which concerns are more important to address in the workplace?

Focus research on dual-earner families that specifically looks at the characteristics of both earners' jobs and their mutual and separate impacts on each other and the family. One researcher concluded that, "Some studies convey a sense that the dual-earner family is simply a place where two employees, one male and one female, eat dinner together every night. The lifestyle is a product of joint interest." Research could be important in shedding more light on the nature of work-family conflict, and what company responses are appropriate. Just as companies have considered the benefits received by the other working spouse, other family-supportive policies should include that focus as well.

Study the relationship between absenteeism, productivity and turnover. Does absenteeism mean less productivity? Some turnover is healthy for the organization. When work-family conflicts are implicated, is the overall impact different? What about the effects on those work measures when problems are accommodated? For instance, some union officials have criticized the on-site child care center for tying employees to a workplace they would rather leave—a case of the company reducing turnover, but not necessarily retaining a productive employee.

Visionary Research

Conduct research to surface work-family problems that will occur in an aging society. The aging of the baby boom is less than 20 years away. Older workers face concerns about retirement, pensions, work schedules, health, and transportation. But there may be problems unique to aging baby boomers. For instance, who will be the caregivers for the potentially large number of women who remain single or childless? At the other end of the age spectrum, what can business expect from the next generation of workers who have spent their early years in child care?

Conclusion

Existing research offers a benchmark for assessing the findings from future studies. By comparing findings, it is possible to see the evolution of employee expectations regarding employer attention to family concerns. Employees may have underestimated their work-family problems in early studies, because workers were concerned about admitting, even anonymously, that they were absent for family reasons. Such admissions were thought to be risky in unsupportive climates.

As work environments change and employers become more savvy about work-family issues employees, now safe when speaking up, may begin to exaggerate their problems in order to ensure a management response. Changes in employee expectations over time may yield a clearer picture of the problem, but not of the solution. As this report has shown, more evaluations of work-family programs can help strengthen the effectiveness of company responses. If companies really want to know the costs and benefits of family-supportive programs, they may not only need to become more family-supportive, but more research friendly as well.

Related Publications

Work and Family Policies: The New Strategic Plan, Research Report No. 949, 1990

Relocating Two-Earner Couples: What Companies Are Doing, Research Bulletin No. 247, 1989

Flexible Staffing and Scheduling in U.S. Corporations, Research Bulletin No. 240, 1989

A Life Cycle Approach to Family Benefits & Policies, *Perspectives* No. 19, 1989

The Countdown on Family Leave, *Perspectives* No. 18, 1989

Family-Supportive Policies: The Corporate Decision-Making Process, Report No. 897, 1987

Corporations and Families: Changing Practices and Perspectives, Report No. 868, 1985

Corporate Financial Assistance for Child Care, Research Bulletin No. 177, 1985

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